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Bethune School & College Centenary Volume

1849—1949



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BETHUNE
SCHOOL & COLLEGE
CENTENARY VOLUME

Sub-Committee

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to know that the Bethune College celebrated its Centenary in the year 1949. The impetus given to women's education in this part of the Country by Mr. Drinkwater Bethune will be long remembered. Though we had women's education on more or less the same lines as men's in the early centuries, due to our political vicissitudes women's education was sadly neglected in recent times. Even today we cannot say we have an adequate number of institutions for the education of women. The new social order cannot be regarded as satisfactory unless it provides equal opportunities economic and educational for women.

The temper of the country is however all in favour of such equal if not identical opportunities. When we were struggling for freedom in the great days of the Indian National Congress we had women presidents, Mrs. Annie Besant and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. After the advent of freedom we have had a Cabinet Minister, an Ambassador and a Governor of a province. These may be regarded as the tokens of the new spirit.

Complacency in the matter will be most unfortunate and steps will have to be taken speedily to increase facilities for women's education. It is essential that in framing schemes and syllabuses for women's education nothing is done to rob women of their essential femininity. Women are expected to inspire and not merely to imitate men. When the history of women's education in India comes to be written the name of Mr. Drinkwater Bethune will have a prominent place.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "A. Radhakrishnan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'A' being large and prominent. The name 'Radhakrishnan' is written in a continuous, flowing script.

इदमु त्यत्पुरुत्तमं पुरस्ताज्
ज्योतिस्तमसो वयुनावदस्थात् ।
नूनं दिवो दुहितरो विभातीर
गातुं कृणवन्नुषसो जनाय ॥

ऋग्वेद

INTRODUCTION

Privileged to offer the public the Jubilee Volume in commemoration of the Centenary of the Bethune School and College (1849-1949) I thank all well-wishers and helpers, the writers of the present volume, the staff and students of the institution for their valued co-operation and convey our felicitations on the opening of the second century of its career, while we turn the corner of the second half of the twentieth century. A hundred years ago when the tiny plant struck its roots into the soil, few realised the significance of women's education in Bengal and in India as a whole. The first half of the 19th century may be characterised as the "Graceless" one, for not a single woman's voice could be heard amidst the harrowing sacrifices of the *Suttee* widows and discordant debates (official and non-official) thereon. Man-made literature of this decadent epoch was not only unchivalrous but undecorous—nay vulgar—while treating of women in that age of her martyrdom (1800-1850). The immortal harbinger of chivalry and life-long champion of womanhood was the great Raja Rammohun Roy and his worthy successors: Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) carried the moral crusade to epochal victory in the second half of the 19th century.

In between we see a most significant interlude which synchronised with the birth (May 1849) of the Bethune School. In the very year of its foundation Michael Madhusudan Dutt from his Madras exile presented a copy of his *Captive Ladie* to John Drinkwater Bethune who made a prophetic statement in his letter (dated 20th July 1849):

"By all that I can learn of your vernacular literature, its best specimens are defiled by grossness and indecency. An ambitious young poet could not desire a finer field for exertion than in taking the lead in giving his countrymen *in his own language* a taste for something higher and better. He might even do good service by translation. This is the way by which the literature of most European nations have been formed."

Madhusudan in his letter (18th August 1849) to his friend Gaurdas Basak confided how his life was more busy than that of a school-boy,—studying daily, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English, Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit . . . "Am I not preparing for the great object of embellishing the *tongue of my fathers?*"

Returning from Madras in 1856 Madhusudan worked with marvellous devotion for six years till he sailed for Europe in June 1862. He created a new poetic language, a new literature and above all a new conception of womanhood through his plays and poems like *Sharmistha* (1858), *Tilottama* (1859), *Padmavati* (1860), *Vrajangana* and *Krishnakumari* (1861), *Virangana* (1862), each scintillating with a new grace and profound understanding of womanhood which will raise Bengali literature to the highest pinnacle of glory through the brilliant successors of Madhusudan like Dinabandhu Mitra, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and above all Rabindranath Tagore, creating a regular Aurora Borealis of love and romance in the firmament of Indian letters. The “graceless” half of the nineteenth century was left behind and woman not only occupied the centre of the stage but began her own contribution to the literary and artistic life of the nation. In 1856 Krishnakamini Dasi published her first poem *Chittavilashini*. Kamini Sundari Dasi is our first woman playwright: her *Urvashi* is dated 1866 and *Usha* 1871. About the same time Nabinkali Devi boldly tackled the theme of unfortunate women, victim of man’s passions, in *Kaminikalanka* (1870) and even a musical comedy *The Unmarried Girl* was composed by some “Srimati”. Mokshada Devi, sister of the first President of the Indian National Congress (W. C. Bonnerjee), edited the *Banga Mahila*, the first women’s fortnightly, from April 1870. So Thakamani edited (July 1875) the first women’s monthly, *Anathini*, suggesting that women’s lot was not all roses. Meanwhile two ardent champions of womanhood Umesh Chandra Dutt published his *Bamabodhini* (1863) and Dwarakanath Ganguly his *Abala Bandhab* (1866) consecrated to the all-round rehabilitation of woman’s life, mind and status. Rabindranath’s eldest sister Saudamini Devi was connected with the Bethune College and his other sister Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932) educated her two talented daughters, Hiranmoyee and Sarala Devi in the same college. The mother and the two daughters managed the brilliant journal *Bharati* (founded in 1876) for years enriching Bengali literature not only by poems, novels and plays but even writing books on music, popular science, politics and patriotic essays of rare quality. Swarnakumari published her first novel *Deepnirvan* in 1876, her opera *Vasanta Utsav* in 1880 and her latest novel *Milan Ratri* in 1925, showing a rare creative record of half a century.

Madhusudan’s niece Mankumari Basu (1863-1943) composed poems and lived to see a galaxy of women writers during her long life of eighty years. Girindra Mohini Dasi 1858-1924 was a poet-painter

who published her *Kabila-Har* in 1872-73 which was appreciatively reviewed in Bankim's *Banga Darshan*. She edited the monthly journal *Jahnavi* for years. Bethune School and College will take just pride in Kamini Roy (1864-1933), the first woman lyrist who began composing from 1880 and published her *Alo-O-Chaya* in 1889 which created a stir in the literary world as much by its rare sensibilities as by the profundity of woman's self-realisation. Like Swarnakumari, Kamini Roy worked with her pen for nearly fifty years and witnessed the emergence of a new generation of womanhood enriching the social, artistic and literary life of Bengal through their original creations.

With Bengal her sister provinces of India began developing their centres of women's education and we see the growth of a brilliant team of women workers. The first federal type of women's organisation was built up under the name of *Bharat Stree Mahamandal* by Sarala Devi, a brilliant scholar of the Bethune College; and she was a veritable pioneer in developing a common front for our enlightened men and women aspiring for freedom through heroic self-sacrifice. She initiated the Veerastami celebrations during the great Swadeshi days, when the Bengal nightingale Sarojini Naidu (*née* Chattopadhyaya) plied her magic harp and later boldly plunged into the final political struggle initiated by Mahatma Gandhi who cherished a mystic love for the land of the immortal anthem *Bande Mataram* and the spiritual melodies of Gurudev Tagore. Daughters of Bengal joined hands with their sisters of other provinces to bring about the final liberation of the Motherland. So when our revered sister Srimati Hansa Mehta (whom we greeted as the member of the Human Rights Commission and first woman Vice-Chancellor of an Indian University) came from Gujerat to grace our Bethune Centenary in Bengal, we felt the symbolic significance of that spiritual collaboration. To all our friends and well-wishers we offer our grateful thanks.

KALIDAS NAG

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সাহিত্যে বঙ্গমহিলা

মানকুমারী বসু, সরৎকুমারী চৌধুরাণী, প্রিয়ম্বদা দেবী।

সাময়িকপত্র সম্পাদনে

মোহিনী দেবী, জ্ঞানদানন্দিনী দেবী, কুমুদিনী বসু।

রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলনে বঙ্গমহিলা

শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী, শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার, শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা রায়, শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা ঘোষ।

সত্যগ্রহ আন্দোলনে

জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, মার্তিঙ্গিনী হাজরা।

বিপ্লব প্রচেষ্টায়

শ্রীযুক্তা শান্তি দাস, প্রীতিলতা ওয়াদেদার।

येनाहं नामृता स्यां,

किमहं तेन कुर्याम् ।

मैत्रेयी

DEDICATED

TO OUR FIRST CHAMPIONS

*“Daughters of Ind, awake! arise!” The call
Went ringing through the silent night. No voice
Replied. The mighty champion fought alone,
The prisoner hugged her chains condemned to die.
On Ganges’ sacred banks pyres crimson flamed,
One walked alone the pyres among to save
The trembling victim, intoxicated, drugged,
Deep pity in his heart and burning shame.
Dark superstitions veiled our ancient faith,
None dared to question and custom turned to law
Ruled tyrannic crushing human rights
Till one sovran voice shattered the freezing spell.
Then doughty champions rose on every side,
Long years the marathonian battle raged
As one by one they came and stood around
The captive lady hammering at her chains.
Of oceanic wisdom one stood there,
There stood the rebel bard with epic pen,
And one with prophet-gaze and wizard tongue
Who won men’s hearts to champion women’s weal.
He named the good with constant heart and pure,
Who the ample page of knowledge spread,
The friend of women cast in heroic mould
Both stood firm, a hundred more unnamed
All cried, “The captive lady must be free”!
The mists dispersed and to their awed sights revealed
The Mighty Mother, captive, bleeding, chained
Men knelt repentant, till one cried aloud
“Hail Mother Supreme! Mother to Thee all hail!”*

Bande Mataram.

LOTIKA GHOSE

HISTORY OF THE BETHUNE SCHOOL & COLLEGE

(1849—1949)

JOGESH C. BAGAL

INTRODUCTION

Education of women is not a new thing in India. In ancient times they used to compose hymns, some of which have found a place in the Vedas. They took part in religious and philosophical discussions with men. Their social status was equal with that of the other sex. Selection of the bridegroom by the bride was a very common thing even in the early centuries of the Christian era. Amongst the Buddhist preachers women were not a few. There were organisations of women celibates and life-long devotees of the Lord Buddha.

The culture that was so widely prevalent amongst our women-folk, found a severe set-back with the advent of the Moslems in India. The *Purdah* system was widely introduced and rigidly followed. All the concomitant evils, such as child-marriage, *Suttee* or immolation of widows with the dead bodies of their husbands, gradually crept in. Free movement of women also came to be restricted. Even in the first decades of the last century, people considered the education of women almost as a sin. They believed that a literate woman would lose her husband sooner than an illiterate one.

But even in those dark days, Indian women, though with restricted freedom, maintained their inherent love of culture. The stories of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* as well as the *Mangal Kavyas* of the middle ages supplied the vacuum created by the want of proper means of education. Their love of art found expression in *Alpana*, painting, sewing and many other useful crafts. Our women used to help men in spinning and weaving *muslin* which was a wonder to the world till the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is not, however, a fact that none of our women were literate in this period. We find some women both amongst Hindus and

Moslems making their mark as authors and poets. Women were also versed in statecraft. Not a few led armies in the battle-field. Some even held the helm of the State with considerable success. In Bengal many Zemindaries were managed by women, the famous Rani Bhawani of Natore in Rajshahi district heading the list. The Rani of Jhansi herself wielded the sword against the British in the Sepoy War of 1857-58. That most of these women leaders were also literate, has been proved beyond doubt. This tradition continued to exist, and even in the first two decades of the last century some system of education of women existed amongst the upper ten. Pearychand Mitra, the great literary figure of the nineteenth century, thus wrote in the preface to his *Adhyatmika* :

“I was born in the year 1814 (12th July) corresponding with the Bengali era 1221 (8 Shravan). While a pupil of the *pathsala*, at home I found my grandmother, mother, and aunts reading Bengali books. They could write in Bengali and keep accounts. There were no female schools then.”

Accounts of some Brahmin women scholars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have come down to us. Hati Vidyalkar, a Bengali resident in Benares, and Syammohini Devi of Kotalipara, district Faridpore, were two eminent women Pundits or Sanskrit scholars. The Hindu gentry headed by Raja Radhakanta Deb and Raja Baidyanath Roy, not only helped the girls' schools started by public agencies to be narrated shortly but they also encouraged women members of their family to receive education at home. They were, however, averse to sending their daughters to public schools then. The generality of women retained a culture which was really ours, and rooted in the soil. But their ignorance and superstition were also great. Much preparation was necessary to make them accept education on modern lines. In this respect the activities of the Ladies' Societies and Associations started under the auspices of the various foreign Missionary bodies should be taken into account.

One thing should, however, be noted in this connection. Raja Rammohun Roy, the greatest of Indian reformers in modern times, started a movement against *Suttee* even before the twenties. To popularise this movement, he used to issue pamphlets in Bengali. In these much stress was laid *inter alia* on the rights and claims of women. He also advocated the cause of women's education so that they might be conscious of their own position in society and discharge their duties adequately to themselves as well as to the people at large. This advocacy of Rammohun gave no less an impetus to the organised efforts of these foreign agencies.

II. PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION THROUGH FOREIGN AGENCIES

A. *The Female Juvenile Society*

Amongst the foreign agencies the Female Juvenile Society was the first to appear in the field. It was constituted in Calcutta some time in the middle of 1819 by European ladies under the auspices of the Baptist Mission of Calcutta. The object of the Society was to open free schools for Bengali girls in and around the city. Rules were framed for the guidance of the Society. The Rev. W. H. Pearce of the Baptist Mission, also European Secretary to the Calcutta School Society, became its President.

The Society commenced its operations soon after it started. The first free school for girls founded by the Society some time in June, was at Gouri Bere, Ultadanga, then considered a suburb in Calcutta. There had been no girls' school before this one was set up. The Society took great pains to collect girls for the school. During the first few months only eight pupils attended. In April 1820, a Bengali lady teacher was found after a diligent search. The number of girls also rose to thirteen. This school was named after the Society—The Female Juvenile School.

Within two years' time the Society was able to start two more schools, besides the one at Gouri Bere. The Female Juvenile School then had thirty-two girls on its roll, and the other two, forty-four. Three girls were attending boys' schools. Except the first one, other schools were named after the home towns of their English lady supporters. These schools bore the name of 'Liverpool School' and 'Salem School'. The fourth school started in the third year was called 'Birmingham School'.

It should be noted that the education imparted to the girls in these schools was most elementary. They, however, made considerable progress in their studies. They were invited by Raja Radhakanta Deb to sit for the annual examinations along with the boys of the Calcutta School Society's schools in 1821 and 1822. The progress of the girls, numbering forty in the latter year, elicited much praise from those present.

Schools for girls were still an anathema to the Hindu gentry. But the importance of women's education was realised by most of them. Raja Radhakanta Deb had already taken steps to popularise the cause by allowing the girls to appear at the annual examinations stated above. He now took another step which had the stamp of a permanent character. He induced Pundit Gour-

mohan Vidyalkar to write *Strisikshavidhayaka* containing “evidence in favour of the education of Hindoo Females, from the examples of illustrious and highly educated women, both ancient and modern”. The Female Juvenile Society took up the work of its publication in 1822. The second and subsequent editions of the book, enlarged to suit the times, were published by the Calcutta School-Book Society. Some chapters of this book were included in the curriculum of the schools.

The Female Juvenile Society continued its labours, though under different names, for some years more. Teaching of needle-work was added to the curriculum. But the thing that was taken exception to by most Hindus, was the introduction of the study of Christianity in these schools. Partly because of the withdrawal of the support of the Hindu gentry for this reason and partly because of the starting of other Ladies’ Societies with the same object in view, the operations of the Female Juvenile Society were very much restricted, but it had the credit of being the pioneer in this line—“a praise which justly belongs to the founders of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, now denominated the Calcutta Baptist Female Society” (J. Statham: *Indian Recollections*. 1832).

B. *The Ladies’ Society*

The full name of this Society was “Ladies’ Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its Vicinity”. It was founded on the 25th March 1824, under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. The latter Society had helped the philanthropic lady, Miss Mary Anne Cooke, to start free girls’ schools since her arrival in Calcutta in November 1821. She set to work and by March 1823 the number of girls’ schools rose to fifteen. It was very difficult for Miss Cooke to visit these distantly situated schools throughout the day and teach the girls in each one of them. The Church Missionary Society proposed to start a Central Female School so that the pupils of the higher classes might assemble there to receive instruction from Miss Cooke. To carry out this proposal as well as to vest the management of these schools in a separate body the Ladies’ Society was ushered into being with Miss Cooke (now, Mrs. Wilson, being married to the Rev. Isaac Wilson) as Superintendent.

The Ladies’ Society commenced its work with twenty-four girls’ schools and four hundred scholars to its credit. These schools had

already been popular among the Hindus. In the inaugural meeting of the Ladies' Society this fact was mentioned in the form of a resolution. Part of it is given below :

“Females of the most respectable caste and station in society, have both sent their daughters, and in some instances, have themselves expressed anxiety to obtain instruction and that the system of instruction has met the expressed concurrence and approbation of some of the most distinguished among the native gentry and religious instructors.”

The Society took charge of these schools. The number of schools and scholars increased. The curriculum included, beside the three R's, the chapters of *Strisikshavidhayaka* and the stories of the Bible. The Hindus, headed by Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Baidyanath Ray, Raja Shib Krishna and others, helped the Society in more ways than one. Orthodox as they were, they did not take notice of the particular subjects of study at this time. The Society turned its attention to the main object for which it was founded, that is, the establishment of a Central Female School as the centre of its activities. Raja Baidyanath Ray donated twenty thousand rupees for this purpose in 1825. The foundation-stone of the proposed central school was laid on the south-east corner of the Cornwallis Square by the Society's Patroness, Lady Amherst, on 18th May 1826 with great ceremony. The new building completed, the Central Female School was formally opened on April 1, 1828, with Mrs. Wilson as its Superintendent. The school prospered for a time. But the zeal of the missionaries could not remain dormant for long, and they converted a few poor pupils of this school. The sympathy and co-operation of upper class Hindus were consequently lost.

Now, the daughters of the converted Hindus and those belonging to the lower strata of Hindu society primarily resorted to these and other schools. A class was formed of the older pupils of the Central School for training them as teachers. It formed the nucleus of the future normal schools, both male and female, in India. A full-fledged normal school was started in the Central Female School premises in 1857 on the basis of this class. The management of this institution has changed hands but it still exists in the same site as a B. T. Institution for Christian Women under the charge of the Free Church.

The philanthropic exertions of Mrs. Wilson, even when Superintendent of the Central Female School, turned into other channels as well. She housed the orphans collected at the time of the floods in Lower Bengal in 1833 and famine in the Upper Provinces in 1834.

She took charge of the orphanage for these destitute children opened at Agarpara by the Church Missionary Society. Meanwhile, her religious belief underwent a change, and while leaving the Society she also cut off her connection with this institution for good in 1846. After twenty-five years of continued service, Mrs. Wilson left the shores of India full of honours. Even today she is remembered with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness for the services she had rendered to the cause of Indian womanhood.

C. The Ladies' Association

Auxiliary to the Ladies' Society, the Ladies' Association was formed on January 14, 1825, by some enterprising European ladies with two distinct objects in view, *viz.*, (1) to assist in raising funds for building a central female school under the auspices of the Ladies' Society and (2) 'to extend education among the native females of Calcutta'. Mrs. Wilson of whom we have heard so much, was the prime mover of this Association. She was elected President. To avoid overlapping, the Association proposed to open schools in those places of Calcutta only where there were no schools of the Ladies' Society.

The Association started work immediately after its formation. Within a year from its start it was able to found a few schools. These schools were superintended chiefly by the ladies residing in the respective localities. Collections by the Association were also satisfactory. It remitted one thousand rupees towards the construction of the Central Female School of the Ladies' Society during the first year.

The number of schools gradually rose to twelve. But owing to the paucity of funds two of them had to be closed during the second year. It should be noted that these schools were more resorted to by the Moslems as they were situated in the Entally and the Jaunbazar area. The Association's activities again had to be restricted. In the third year of its existence, it had to close some schools, and to draw the rest into two schools, one at Beniatola with forty girls and the other at Champatala with twenty-five girls. The Calcutta Ladies' Association continued for some years more. By 1833 it maintained only one school on the Circular Road. Like the other two Societies, this Association also laid much stress on teaching the Bible. Latterly only Biblical instructions were given to each one of the four classes of the school. The Ladies' Association was discontinued sometime in 1834.

D. *The Serampore Mission*

The Serampore Mission of Carey, Marshman and Ward, too, did much for the cause of women's education in Bengal in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The educational activities of the Mission were at first confined to the opening of schools for the daughters of Christian converts only. It was not until the return of Ward in November 1821 that they turned their attention to the education of girls in general. It should be said in passing that Miss Cooke had accompanied Ward to India. Ward established a number of schools in and around Serampore, but before he could make much headway, death took him away on 7th March 1823.

But his colleagues took up the cause in right earnest. We find in April 1824 two hundred and thirty girls belonging to thirteen girls' schools, assembled for examination in the house of Gopal Mallik at Serampore. Though the curriculum included the teaching of the Bible, the Hindus of the locality like those of Calcutta in the beginning helped these educational activities of the Mission. In the following year more than three hundred girls sat for the annual examination held in the Serampore College hall.

The activities of the Mission were not confined to the Serampore area only. It had its branches over the whole of Bengal as well as at Benares, Allahabad and Aracan. At every station girls' schools were opened and managed by the wives of the Mission's workers. In January 1828, Serampore possessed twelve schools, six in Beerbhoom, five in Dacca and three in Chittagong. Besides these, the Mission started schools, one each, in Jessore, Akyab, Allahabad and Benares. The total number of girl students in all these schools numbered five hundred and fifty. Even in 1831 the Serampore Mission was maintaining schools at some stations. But this number gradually became less. Owing to some domestic arrangements with the parent Body at Home, the Serampore Mission had to relinquish much of its activities by 1838. And for this reason also most of the girls' schools supported by the Mission had to be discontinued.

III. PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Pioneer Attempts of the Bengalis

These attempts on the part of the foreign agencies, however, failed to catch the imagination of the people. The Missionaries wanted to turn their schools into so many proselytizing centres.

Even in the mofussil members of the respectable classes gradually withdrew their daughters from schools. These missionary schools became the resort of women of the lower castes and Christian converts. Compulsory study of the Bible was the main reason why these schools were not popular with the Hindus. Leading Hindus like Raja Radhakanta Deb, though ardent supporters of women's education, had to withdraw their support from them only on this account. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, himself an advocate of women's education, voiced the feelings of his countrymen in his *Reformer* of the 19th December 1831. While noticing the examination of the Central Female School of Simla, he writes :

"The design of this institution appears to have been to qualify its pupils for the purpose of going into respectable families, to instruct the women who are not in the habit of appearing abroad; but by the system of education which has been adopted, we fear it will fail to produce the happy effects which had been anticipated.

"The pupils of this institution consist for the most part of the lowest classes, who are not permitted to frequent the houses of the respectable natives. For these women it will be difficult to find access to the respectable females, particularly when it is known that their education consists chiefly of the knowledge of the New Testament and the Religious tracts. Prejudice of caste and the stronger prejudice which the generality of natives continue to entertain against Christianity, are at present likely to raise an insurmountable barrier against the success of their endeavours. Had not the founders of the Hindu College given a pledge that the religion of the pupils would not be interfered with, the same obstacles would have stood in the way of that institution, and it would never have achieved the wonderful spread of education which has flowed from it.

"We would recommend a more liberal system of education to be adopted in the female school. Let its pupils be initiated into general knowledge, and let its managers pay a particular attention to the national prejudices of those whom they wish to educate. They will then be more likely to succeed in the laudable object of their undertaking, and we have no doubt their institution will commence to cause the spread of knowledge amongst the Hindu females, which the Hindu College has done amongst the men."

The advice given by Prasanna Kumar appeared to carry little weight with the authorities of this and other missionary schools. As had already been said, most of them were either given up or became the resort of the new converts. It was the same case even with the mofussil schools. A correspondent from Chinsurah wrote to the *Samachar Darpan* of March 3, 1838 as follows :



JOHN ELLIOT DRINKWATER BETHUNE

ASSOCIATES OF
J. E. D. BETHUNE



RANIGOPAL GHOSH



RAJA DAKSHINA
RANJAN MUKHERJI

“A few benevolent European gentlemen and ladies, indeed, made some attempt to introduce female schools, but they have failed, excepting in one or two places, where a small number of the very lowest classes attend the schools for the sake of clothing and other rewards.”

The Missionary endeavours could not, therefore, make much headway so far as women's education was concerned. Raja Radhakanta Deb's support to the cause of women's education and Raja Rammohun Roy's efforts towards the general improvement of the status of Indian women have already been mentioned. 1829 is memorable in the history of our national progress, because it was in this year that Lord William Bentinck abolished the cruel custom of *Suttee* by passing a prohibitory Act. This gave a great impetus to the cause of our women. We see that the young scholars of the Hindu College, the beneficent and liberal teachings of which have already been hinted at, were already thinking of the education of our women. In their paper *Parthenon*, they wrote an article, advocating female education. Though this paper was suppressed by the College authorities for advocating progressive views, the *alumni* of the College did not hesitate to take up the cause of women's education and associated themselves in all the endeavours made in this behalf. I will narrate their activities presently.

But before this let us see how others strove for the cause. Motilal Seal, the Rothschild of Calcutta, held progressive views so far as the cause of women was concerned. Remarriage of widows and education of women were the two subjects that received his particular attention. He even offered ten thousand rupees to the Bengali youth who would first venture to marry a Hindu widow. Whether all these proposals of his had ever taken a practical shape we do not know.

The ex-students of the Hindu College, most of whom became famous in after-life for their unstinted services to the Motherland, continued the discussion they had so courageously started in their student-days regarding the welfare of women. K. M. Banerjea, the noted Christian convert, wrote a prize-essay in 1840 and got it published the year following in book-form—*Native Female Education*. In this he traced the backwardness of Indian women and prevalent social conditions compared with the social conditions prevailing in by-gone days in India, and advanced a plea for the education of Indian women in their own homes by European ladies on the lines already pursued in schools established for girls. Pearychand Mitra, an equally famous student of the Hindu College and a life-long worker in the cause of women's improvement, controverted some of

the findings of K. M. Banerjea in a paper read before the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge.

Ramgopal Ghose, another eminent *alumnus* of the Hindu College, offered two prizes, one gold medal and one silver, to the best and second best writer of an essay on the necessity of female education in 1842. The competition was confined to the boys of the first and the second class of the Hindu College. Those of the second class only participated. The first prize was won by Madhusudan Dutt and the second by Bhudeb Mukherjee, both of whom rose to eminence as literary figures in after-life.

The 'Young Bengal' group—as the progressive elements of the Hindu College students were called—headed by Ramgopal, were persistent in their advocacy for the cause of Indian women. And it was also in the meetings of the Bengal British India Society, a socio-political body of the forties founded by them, that they prepared a plan for the spread of female education in Bengali society. To give this plan a practical shape the public-spirited Mukherjee brothers of Uttarpara—Joykissen Mukherjee and Rajkissen Mukherjee—approached the Council of Education in 1845 with a scheme for opening a girls' school at Uttarpara. But the Council sat over it for four years. And when they again approached the latter for the same purpose, they refused them any pecuniary help pleading paucity of funds, and opined that 'they would prefer awaiting the result of an experiment conducted elsewhere independent of the Government'.

Meanwhile, in 1847, a free school for girls was started at Baraset. In this endeavour an ex-student of the Hindu College, Peary Churn Sirkar, took a prominent part. He was posted there in 1846 as the Head Master of the Baraset Government School. Dr. Nabin Krishna Mitra and Kali Krishna Mitra together with a few other public-spirited men of Baraset, conferred with Peary Churn on this subject and the result was the opening of a free school for indigent boys and another for girls. It is said that John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune took the cue of his school at Calcutta from the one at Baraset where he had gone to inspect educational institutions as President of the Council of Education. Thus the stage of discussion had passed and actual work now began. It is a matter of great joy for us to remember that the first free school for women of a modern type was started by Bengalis in one of our mofussil towns in the mid-forties of the last century.

But to make this type of schools widely accepted by the respectable classes, it was necessary to supply some other desideratum. And it was left for John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune to rise

equal to the occasion and establish such a school under more favourable and influential auspices in Calcutta, the capital city and the seat of Government, to be a pioneer lay public institution whose example could be followed.

IV. JOHN ELLIOT DRINKWATER BETHUNE AND HIS SCHOOL

Preliminary

John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune was a brilliant student of the Trinity College, Cambridge. He studied Law and took to the Bar. As a counsel to the Home Office he came into prominence and remained in that post till his Indian appointment. A life-long bachelor, Bethune engaged himself heart and soul in the pursuit of knowledge. He was also a poet of considerable merit. Even while in England, he followed our educational efforts with unusual interest. He felt very much distressed at the sad plight of our women-folk. He considered education as the only means for their rapid improvement.

Bethune arrived in India in April 1848, as Legal Member in the Governor-General's Council and by virtue of his position he became President of the Council of Education. Here he made acquaintance with Ramgopal Ghose, also a member of the latter Council. Bethune wanted to set up a lay school for girls and apprised Ramgopal of his intentions. Ramgopal heartily acquiesced. He told his friends of Bethune's desire and presented them before the latter for mutual discussion. Bethune told them of his intentions. They in their turn promised him all help and expressed readiness to send their daughters to the proposed school.

Accompanied by Ramgopal, Bethune went to the Baitakkhana house of Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee at 56 Sukeas Street, then known as Bahir Simulia, in search of a site for the proposed school. Dakshinaranjan was not at home at the time. On his return he learnt of Bethune's visit. Though not acquainted with Bethune, Dakshinaranjan went to his place at the earliest opportunity and offered him his Baitakkhana house for the proposed school free of rent. He also offered his personal library worth about five thousand rupees for the school. For the permanent habitation of the school he proposed to make a gift of five and a half bighas of land in Mirzapur. For building a permanent structure there he expressed his desire to give one thousand rupees more in cash. Dakshinaranjan came back home, made his proposals in writing and sent them to Bethune. Bethune accepted them with thanks.

Amongst others who helped Bethune to mature his plans, the name of Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar deserves special mention.

The School opened

Preliminary arrangements completed, Bethune started the school at the above place on 7th May 1849 with twenty-one girls on the roll. The opening ceremony was very simple. Bethune delivered an address* suitable to the occasion. He gave reasons for his not asking government help, for in that case the establishment of the school would have been delayed. He did not invite the leading citizens of Calcutta, such as Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Kali Krishna, Asutosh Deb, and Prasannakumar Tagore, because they might not approve of the way of his approach or might try to impose their own method upon the new school. He also abstained from inviting European ladies and gentlemen, for in that case it might look like a public function. In his address he definitely called the school by the name of "Calcutta Female School".†

Bethune narrated in his address the nature of the course of studies as follows:

"I ought not to conclude without saying one word on the nature of the studies that are to be pursued here. It is well understood by you all that the plan which has been uniformly followed in the Government Schools, of not meddling with the religion of your children, is to be strictly followed here. There are some, I know, who are very apt to sneer at the notion of learned females, and they may form an idea of the sort of education which we propose to give to these girls, which I think it very likely that I should be

*The address is given in full in the Appendix.

†There was some confusion at the time regarding the name of Bethune's School. *Sambad Prabhakar* called the proposed school, on the morning of its opening day, "Victoria Bangla Bidyalaya". Two days after, on the 9th May 1849, as well as in some subsequent issues the paper mentioned it as "Victoria Bahka Bidyalaya". But there is positive proof that this was a misnomer. In his opening speech, Bethune gave his school the distinct appellation of the "Calcutta Female School". Let me quote the relevant portion from his speech as follows:

"The time may come, and that at no distant period, when all reserve of this kind may be laid aside when the Calcutta Female School, by whatever other and more illustrious name it may then be known, shall take its proud place among the most honoured, as it will assuredly be one of the most useful institutions of the land".

Some discussion was going on at the time about naming the school after Queen Victoria, and the *Sambad Prabhakar* printed the name prematurely. The paper continued to mention the school as such till 4th June, 1849, after which it gave up this appellation and called the school simply as 'Bahka Bidyalaya.'

ready to join with them in ridiculing. But if any of you have done me the honour to attend to the remarks which I have had occasion to make in connection with the education of the boys of Bengal, you will see how constantly I have dwelt on the importance of sedulously cultivating their mother tongue, that I had told them that we resort to English, chiefly on account of the superiority of its literature, and that we expect of our students that sooner or later they will impart to their countrymen in their own language the knowledge which they have gained in ours. Judge then whether these opinions are not likely to be applied by me with ten-fold force to the education of girls, who are not called on to be the instructors of others except in the bosom of their own families. As far as literature, therefore, is concerned, we shall make Bengali the foundation, and resort to English only for some of those subsidiary advantages, and when we know that the communication of such knowledge is not in opposition to the wishes of the parents. Besides which, there are a thousand feminine works and accomplishments, with their needles, in embroidery and fancy work, in drawing, in many other things which I am not half so competent to describe as my friend Mrs. Ridsdale, whose province it will be to teach them. The knowledge of these things will give to your children the means of adorning their own homes, and of supplying themselves with harmless and elegant employment."

Bethune proposed that girls who lived at a distance would be taken to the school and sent back home in the school-carriage. None but the girls of respectable Hindus would be admitted. And the school would work in the morning up to 9. An old Brahmin Pandit was appointed to give instruction in the three R's. Mrs. Ridsdale took charge of the industrial work.

Of the twenty-one girls who attended school on the opening day were the two daughters of Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Bhubanmala and Kundamala. Bethune made a special mention of Madan Mohan along with Rangopal and Dakshinaranjan in his letter to Lord Dalhousie, then Governor-General, on the 29th March 1850. He wrote:

"The three natives to whom I desire especially to record my gratitude for their assistance are Baboo Ram Gopal Ghose, the well-known merchant who was my principal adviser in the first instance and who procured me my first pupils, Baboo Dukkhina Runjan Mookerjee, a Zemindar, who was previously unknown to me, but who, as soon as my design was published, introduced himself to me for the purpose of offering me the free gift of a site for the school, or five bighas of land valued at 10,000 rupees in the native quarter

of the town and Pundit Madan Mohun Turkalunkar, one of the *Pundits of the Sanskrit College, who not only sent two daughters to the school, but has continued to attend it daily, to give gratuitous instruction to the children in Bengali, and has employed his leisure time in the compilation of a series of elementary Bengali Books expressly for their own use*’.*

The school thus opened was a lay public institution, and girls could attend it in large numbers. But attending schools was not yet the custom among the respectable classes. The more conservative amongst them rose publicly against the school. Some of those who sent their girls before, were now prevented from doing so. The number of students at one time dwindled to seven, but it was a happy sign of the times that at the end of the first year the number rose to thirty-four.

Raja Radhakanta Deb started a girls’ school in his house at Sobhabazar, Calcutta, only fifteen days after Bethune had founded his institution.

The Baraset Girl School was remodelled on the pattern of the Bethune School, and some new girls’ schools were started at Neebudhia, Sooksagar and Uttarpara. But there was local opposition. Some people of Baraset even put the organisers of the Baraset School to indignities. The Government did not help these organisations. The mischief-mongers took advantage of this fact and construed it as governmental antipathy to these endeavours. Bethune, in his famous letter to Lord Dalhousie already referred to, requested the Government of India to issue a circular letter to the Local Government and through them to the Magistrates and the Council of Education to express public sympathy with these private endeavours. A circular was accordingly issued by the Government of India to the Local Government on 11th April 1850. Thus the foundation of the Female School by Bethune was the signal for further national endeavour on the same line and had far-reaching consequences.

In the above letter to Lord Dalhousie, Bethune also requested him to sound the Court of Directors whether it would be feasible to name the institution after Queen Victoria. But the Court were still afraid of the conservative feeling. In their despatch to the Governor-General, dated 4th September 1850, the Court of Directors signified their approval of this pioneer attempt, but could not accept the request of Bethune forwarded to them by the Governor-General. They did not “think that the present state of female education was

such as to warrant the unusual proceedings of applying for the sanction of *Her Majesty's name to the Female School at Calcutta*."*

The Bengali newspapers of progressive thought, such as *Sambad Prabhakar* and *Sambad Bhaskar*, supported the school vigorously, while a few others, presumably of the old school, took to spreading calumny. Raja Radhakanta Deb, the doughty champion of women's education, in a letter to Bethune, wrote of these publications as "certainly the vituperation of a malignant mind that cannot rest without doing evil".† It should be noted that the Raja himself was a conservative of the conservatives in other social matters.

Own Habitation

Bethune purchased a new plot of land adjacent to that given over by Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee in Mirzapur, at the cost of ten thousand rupees. The Government of Bengal owned some land to the west of the Cornwallis Square. As Mirzapur was then deemed as outskirts of the city, Bethune preferred this place to the former as a suitable site for the school. He arranged with the Government of Bengal to have this plot in exchange of Dakshinaranjan's and his in Mirzapur.

The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of the school-building on this new piece of land was held on November 6, 1850. This day the East India Company's Attorney presented the title-deeds of the ground to Bethune and Dakshinaranjan and made over possession of it to them by the delivery of an Asoka tree. At Bethune's request, towards the end of the ceremony Lady Littler planted the tree in a conspicuous part of the spot intended for the school garden. The main ceremony of laying the foundation-stone was conducted by Sir John Hunter Littler, Deputy Governor of Bengal, with the help of the Masonic Brethren just at sun-set. A short account of the ceremony is given below :

"Sir John Littler first arrived, and, shortly afterwards, the masonic body marched from the General Assembly's Institution to the site of the intended building. Having arrived within a proper distance of the spot the procession halted, the Brethren opened to the right and the left, and faced inwards, so as to leave room for the Officiating Grand Master, preceded by his standard and sword-bearer, to pass up the centre, followed by the rest in succession,

**Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, p. 61

†*Beginnings of Modern Education in Bengal Women's Education*, Appendix pp. 69, 70.

so as to invert the order of the procession. When the Grand Master arrived, he received the plans of the building from the builder, Mr. Gray, and presented them to Sir John Littler and the rest of the company for their inspection. The inscription on the (copper) plate was then read by the Grand Master, who then requested Sir John Littler to descend from the platform, in order to assist at the ceremony, presenting him at the same time with the silver trowel made for the occasion. The Grand Master then placed two bottles containing coins and records of the present reign in holes prepared for them in the lower part of the stone. The plate was then laid on them in its bed by Sir John Littler, and the cement applied, and the upper stone was then let down slowly, solemn music playing. The Grand Master then proved the stone by the square level, and plump-rule, which were successively handed to him by the Grand Wardens, after which the Grand Master said: 'May the Grand Architect of the Universe bless this foundation-stone which we have laid, and may we be enabled by His Providence, to perfect this and other virtuous undertakings.' The cornucopia and cup of wine and oil were then handed to the Grand Master as before, who, having poured them on the stone, said: 'May the bounteous Author of all good bless the city with the abundance of corn and wine and oil, and all other necessities and comforts of life'."*

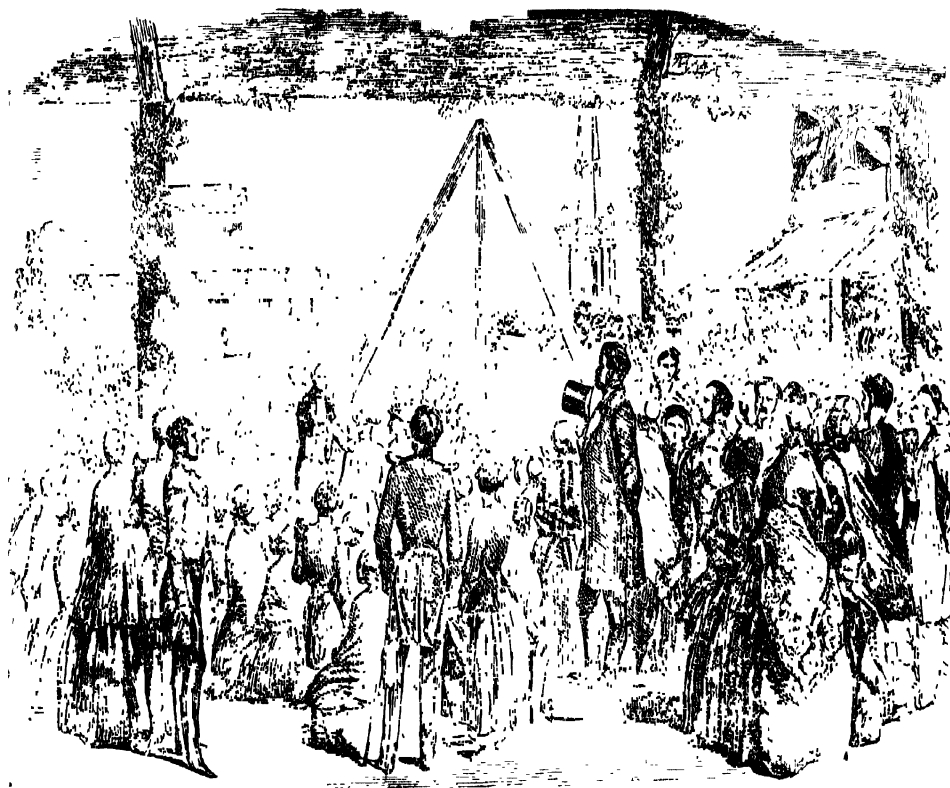
This interesting ceremony has been depicted in a picture reproduced in this volume.

Sir John Hunter Littler, after laying the foundation-stone, addressed the assembly in suitable terms.

The Court of Directors, as we have already said did not think it prudent to approach Her Majesty for the appendage of her name to Bethune's school. There was one inscription on the copper-plate, and another on the silver trowel. In both these inscriptions occur the name "Hindu Female School". The following is the inscription on the copper-plate deposited in the foundation-stone:

IN THE REIGN OF
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY
VICTORIA,
THE FOUNDATION STONE
OF THE
HINDU FEMALE SCHOOL
IN
CORNWALLIS SQUARE CALCUTTA

**The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, Nov. 8, 1850.



FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY OF THE BETHUNE SCHOOL

6TH NOVEMBER, 1850



BUILDING OF THE BETHUNE SCHOOL

Completed in September 1891

WAS LAID WITH MASONIC HONOURS
 BY
 MAJOR GENERAL THE HONOURABLE SIR JOHN
 HUNTER LITTLER, G.C.B.
 DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF BENGAL
 ASSISTED BY
 THE OFFICIATING DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF BENGAL
 SUPPORTED BY A NUMEROUS AND RESPECTABLE
 CONVOCATION OF THE CRAFT
 AND A LARGE ASSEMBLY OF THE INHABITANTS OF
 CALCUTTA.

On Wednesday the Sixth Day of November
 A.D. MDCCCL.

A.L. VDCCL.

*Wisdom exalleth her children, and layeth hold of them that seek
 her; he that loveth her loveth life, and they that seek to her
 early shall be filled with joy.—Ecclesiasticus, IV, 11, 12.**

The Inscription on the Trowel, with which the mortar was laid
 on the copper-plate, was as follows:

PRESENTED BY
 THE HONORABLE J. E. D. BETHUNE OF BALFOUR,
 MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF INDIA:
 AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF
 EDUCATION
 TO
 MAJOR GENERAL
 THE HONORABLE SIR JOHN HUNTER LITTLER, G.C.B.
 DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF BENGAL
 BEING THE TROWEL USED IN LAYING
 THE FOUNDATION STONE
 OF THE
 HINDU FEMALE SCHOOL
 A.D. MDCCCL. 6TH NOV.

A.L. VDCCL.

*Who can find a Virtuous Woman? For her price is far above
 rubies. She openeth her mouth with wisdom: and in her
 tongue is the Law of Kindness. Her children arise up and
 call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her—
 Prov. XXXI, 10, 26, 28.*

* Ibid.

(On the Reverse)

Elevation of the Building with Masonic emblems.*

Bethune's speech on this occasion was a memorable one. From the historical point of view, its importance cannot be over-estimated. It is wrongly said that the present site of the school stands on the land given by Dakshinaranjan. It has been positively proved that the present site was a governmental property, and taken in exchange of that given by Dakshinaranjan in Mirzapur together with the plot purchased by Bethune himself. The main burden of Bethune's speech was concerning this transfer of property. He referred to Dakshinaranjan's liberality in very glowing terms. The following excerpts from the speech are not only entertaining but illuminating, too. Addressing Sir John Littler Bethune said:

"For myself and for my friend Duckinarunjun Mookerjea, I make answer before these witnesses, that we accept the gift and assurance of this land according to the form and tenure of this same deed: and further for myself I promise and undertake, in the presence of this company, that, if life and ability be granted to me, I will build upon this spot a school for the education of Hindu girls, which, with the blessings of God, I trust may be destined hereafter to produce effects worthily entitling it to have a name in the annals of the land.

"It is probable, Sir, that there are many persons present who do not know that the ceremony through which we have just gone, for giving us the ownership of this land, is the most ancient and honorable form of conveyance of land known to the English law. It has been selected on this occasion not merely for that reason, not merely because of the remarkable analogy which it bears to the simple forms that have been immemorially used in Eastern countries, but also, and especially, because it has given me an opportunity of publicly associating with myself, and now enables me openly to proclaim my gratitude to the enlightened man who stands near me, to whom jointly with myself, the land has been conveyed. Duckinarunjun Mookerjea was an utter stranger to me: I had never before heard his name, when he introduced himself to me a year and a half ago, for the purpose of letting me know that he had heard of my intention of founding a female school for the benefit of his country: that he could not bear the thought that it should be said hereafter of his countrymen that they had all stood idly looking on, without offering any help in furtherance of the good work: and in short without further preface, that he was the proprietor of a

* *Ibid.*

piece of ground in Calcutta, valued, as I have since learned, at about twelve thousand rupees, which he placed freely and unconditionally at my disposal for the use of the school. It was a noble gift, and nobly given. I subsequently was enabled to possess myself of some adjoining slips of land, until at last we became proprietors of the whole of that which by the munificent liberality of the Government of Bengal, exercised, as I was in substance told, in the letter announcing their decision expressly to testify their approval of my design, we were permitted to exchange for this more valuable and far more eligible site on which we are now met. It is due to Duckinarunjun Mookerjee that his name should be held in perpetual remembrance in connexion with the foundation of the school."

Referring to the symbol of the Asoka tree, Bethune said:

"You have seen possession of this land symbolically given, by delivery to us of a young Asoka tree, which I hope that one of the ladies present will presently do us the honour of planting in a conspicuous place, in that which is intended to become the garden of the school. The choice of this particular tree for the purpose has not been made unadvisedly or without a meaning. I am told that its Bengali name may be not unfitly paraphrased as 'The Tree of Gladness'. It is commended for this day's ceremony not only by the gracefulness of its foliage, and the surpassing beauty of its flowers, but also because it is held in especial honour among Hindu women. I understand that formerly they believed that, by eating its blossoms, they should bring a blessing on their children....I propose therefore henceforth that the Asoka tree be made the symbol of female education in India; and not only here, but by every school which has been already established in the villages round Calcutta in imitation of this, and near all those which shall hereafter be multiplied in the land, I suggest that an Asoka tree be planted, a new tree of liberty, to remind us of the bond of fellowship which unites our labour in one common cause."*

After the ceremony was over, the distinguished persons of the assemblage were taken to Dakshinaranjan's house on the Sukeas' Street. There they were feasted sumptuously. They separated at about 9 p.m.

Further Progress

Bethune bore the expenses of the institution from his own pocket amounting to eight hundred rupees per month. The cost of the school-building was estimated to be not less than forty thousand

* *Ibid.*

rupees which also he was to bear. In December, 1850, Bethune appointed Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Secretary to the school. We have it on the authority of Sambhu Chandra Vidyaratna, the biographer of Vidyasagar, that the latter induced many respectable Hindus to send their girls here. From the same source we learn that before the proposed building was completed, the Calcutta Female School was transferred to a house on the south-east corner of the College Square. This house had been previously occupied by David Hare's Pataldanga school, later known as the Hare School. The Calcutta Female School soon attracted such influential Bengalis as Debendranath Tagore and Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur as its supporters and the number of its students increased to eighty in the middle of 1851. We are told

"One of the most influential Natives in Calcutta, Debendranath Tagore, has added his own daughter to the long list of eighty female children already receiving instruction in this Institution, and the Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur, who occupies the most prominent position in Hindu Society in the metropolis, has accepted the office of its president."†

Bethune's life was cut short by death on 12th August, 1851. But it was found that he had made by Will, a gift of his Calcutta property worth Rs. 30,000 to the school. The relevant portion of the Will runs as follows:

"I give my carriages and horses now used at the Female School in Calcutta to the East India Company to be retained and used for the purpose of the said school. I give and devise all my interest in the lands, buildings and other property in Calcutta, now intended to be used and occupied as a Female School, to the East India Company and their successors and assignees for ever with my request that they will endow the said institution as a Female School in perpetuity, and honorably connect therewith the name of Babu Dukhinarunjun Mookerjea in honorable testimony of his great exertions in the cause."

The building was completed in September 1851 and the school was transferred there since then. Thus the first Chapter of Bethune's School is closed.

V. LORD DALHOUSIE'S INTEREST IN BETHUNE'S SCHOOL

In the previous chapter I have had occasion to mention Bethune's Letter to Lord Dalhousie and the Governor-General-in-

† *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for August, 1851, p. 378.

Council's circular thereon. The circular only gave its approbation. There was no mention in it of giving any pecuniary aid by the Government either to Mr. Bethune's school or to the schools started near about Calcutta. Nevertheless Lord and Lady Dalhousie were taking unusual interest in women's education and particularly in Mr. Bethune's school. After the sudden and untimely death of Bethune, Lord Dalhousie personally undertook the charge of the school. How much he had to pay every month is evident from the following news-item published in *The Hindu Intelligencer* of February 6, 1854:

"We believe it is generally known that since Mr. Bethune's death the Governor-General has supported entirely at his own cost the Native Female School which has been about Rs. 700/- per mensem.

"His Lordship has signified his desire that the school may be kept open at his sole charge so long as he remains in India, his anxiety being that he might be assured that it may not fall to the ground whenever he retires from his present office."—*Hurkuru*, Feb. 3.

Lord Dalhousie, or to be more exact the Governor-General-in-Council, had already entered into correspondence with the Court of Directors on the subject. They requested the latter to adopt the school at their own charge. To this the Court readily agreed, but suggested that some fee should be immediately realised from each student of the school. The Governor-General-in-Council, while thanking the Court for their ready assent, could not, however, agree to the proposal of levying a fee. They wrote:

"There is one point however suggested by your Court which strikes us as being of doubtful expediency, and that the levy of a fee from the pupils generally. Fees in such cases have not been found to work badly, but where the experiment of Female Education is concerned, we would not interpose the risk of even a small fee to the successful accomplishment of the design of the benevolent founder of the institution."

We have already seen that Lord Dalhousie was all along willing to bear the burden of the school, and with his consent they further added:

"The Most Noble, the Governor-General desires to add to the acknowledgements of this Government his personal and respectful thanks to your Honourable Court, but His Lordship begs permission to decline your liberality in wishing to relieve him at once from the charge of the institution. His Lordship has signified his desire to

maintain the School so long as he remains in India, and he begs that arrangement may be allowed to stand ”*

To this the Court had no reason to disagree. The movement set afoot by the establishment of Bethune's School gradually spread. The Court of Directors could not fail to take cognizance of this fact in their famous education Despatch on 19th July, 1854. The relevant portion of the Despatch reads thus:

“The importance of female education in India cannot be over-estimated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which Grants-in-aid may be given; and we cannot refrain from expressing our cordial sympathy with the efforts which are being made in this direction. Our Governor-General in Council has declared, in a communication to the Government of Bengal, that the Government ought to give the native female education in India its frank and cordial support; in this we heartily concur, and we especially approve of the bestowal of marks of honor upon such native gentlemen as Rao Bahadur Maganbhai Karramchand, who devoted 20,000 rupees to the foundation of two native female schools in Ahmedabad, as by such means our desire for the extension of female education becomes generally known.”

Lord Dalhousie left India on March 6, 1856. As had been previously arranged, the Government took charge of the school after his departure. Lord Canning, successor to Lord Dalhousie, as well as Lady Canning, were much interested in its affairs. Lady Canning implored the leading men of the town to send their daughters to the school in large numbers. The Government had already placed the school under the sole charge of Sir Cecil Beadon, one of their Secretaries. In a letter to them on August 12, Beadon made some suggestions for the improvement of the school, one of which being the constitution of a strong managing committee with the leading and influential Hindus of Calcutta. On his advice the Government notified in *The Calcutta Gazette* of the 20th September 1856 the constitution of the following Committee for Mr. Bethune's School:

President: Sir Cecil Beadon; Members: Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Raja Pratabchandra Sinha, Rai Harachandra Ghose

* *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, pp. 62-3.

Bahadur, Amritalal Mitra, Ray Prannath Choudhury, Ramratna Roy, Kasiprasad Ghose; Hony. Secretary: Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

With the constitution of the Committee the school entered into a new phase.

VI. THE SCHOOL UNDER THE SECRETARYSHIP OF PANDIT ISWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

In their Despatch of 1854 the Court of Directors had approved of the proposal of Grants-in-aid to the female schools, too. By 1857 the Local Government found it possible to offer grants to some girls' schools. Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar as a special Inspector of South Bengal was engaged in establishing model vernacular schools in the districts of Hooghly, Burdwan and Midnapore. Taking the cue from the offer of Grants-in-aid to female schools as well Vidyasagar himself opened a few girls' schools in selected places of the above districts. People's hostility towards women's education had almost lost its sting. The movement of women's education, started by the establishment of the Calcutta Female School by Bethune, not only spread, but served to popularise the cause of women's education in Bengal.

The Managing Committee being duly formed, the first thing they did was to issue a circular letter to the Hindus of Calcutta and its suburbs about the school. It was issued on December 24, 1856 under the signatures of Sir Cecil Beadon, President; and Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Secretary to the Committee. Portions of it are given here:

"The Government have appointed us a Committee to manage the school founded by the late Mr. Bethune. . . . None but the daughters of the respectable Hindus are admitted. . . . Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Natural Science, Geography, Needle-work—these subjects are taught. They are instructed through the medium of Bengali. Lessons in English are given to those only whose parents and guardians wish it.

"No fee is charged from the girls. Books are also supplied free. Those who live at a distance from the school and are unable to bear the cost of conveyance, are allowed free use of the carriages and *palkies* of the school." (Translated from Bengali published in *Sambad Prabhakar*, January 13, 1857.)

It has already been noticed that Bethune chose Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar as an ardent co-worker in the cause of

his school so far back as 1850. In spite of his many-sided activities Vidyasagar always took a lively interest in the welfare of the institution. Elementary subjects only were taught to the girls. With this limitation the school maintained its progress. We get a glimpse of the condition of the school and the progress made by it during the Secretaryship of Pandit Vidyasagar in the report, dated Dec. 15. 1862. The following extracts from it are given below:

“Reading, writing, arithmetic, biography, geography, and history of Bengal, with gallery lessons on objects form the course of study. Needle-work and sewing are likewise taught. Instruction is imparted to the pupils through the medium of the vernacular. The tutorial staff consists of a Head Mistress, with two female assistants and two pandits. Besides general superintendence, the Head Mistress teaches needle-work to the first and second classes, and revises the lessons given to them by the pandits. The second mistress teaches needle-work and sewing to the remaining classes, assisted by the third mistress. The third mistress teaches in addition the class consisting of beginners in which the phonetic system is being experimentally introduced. The pandits teach all the books read in the several classes. . .

“As regards the number of admissions, the Committee beg to observe that there has been a steady increase from 1859. The number at present on the rolls is ninety-three. It would have exceeded 100 ere this, if the Committee had not been obliged to reject applications for admission for some time from want of the means of conveyance. The inconvenience has since been removed by the provision of a third carriage, and it is hoped that the anticipated increase will soon take place. It may be as well to mention, with reference to this third conveyance, that Rajah Pratap Chandra Singh Bahadur presented an omnibus, and that some of the members of the Committee, and a few other native friends of female education, subscribed for a pair of horses. . .

“As regards the proficiency attained by the first class the Committee regret to observe that, owing to early withdrawals, the majority of the pupils are unable to prosecute their studies up to the standard. In cases, however, where girls are admitted at an early age, and permitted to remain at school till the age of eleven or twelve, they attain a fair amount of knowledge in the different subjects taught.

“From the manner in which the number of admissions has recently gone on increasing, the Committee trust that the institution is rising in the estimation of those classes of the community for whose benefit it was originally established. The wealthier classes

of native gentlemen do not indeed seem as yet to be availing themselves directly of the advantages offered by the school; a very few admissions have as yet been made from those classes. The Committee, however, are happy to believe that home education for females is being resorted to in many families amongst the wealthier classes; and this result, they believe, is in a considerable degree owing to the beneficial influence of the Bethune School.

“If a large number of conveyances were at the disposal of the Committee, the school might be made more extensively useful. It will be understood, however, that if the number of children should exceed a certain limit, increased resources will then be required in order to supply an extra staff of instructors, etc. . .”

Progress of female education was noticed for the first time in the *Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1862-63*. The substance of the annual report of Mr. Bethune's School, from which the above extracts are made is also given in the *Report* for the first time. The school was no longer designated the ‘Hindu Female School’ or the ‘Calcutta Female School’, but the ‘Bethune School’. We have seen already that the institution of Mr. Bethune had given a general impetus in the education of women. Home education for women was extensively resorted to. The above *Report* under the heading “Female Education” states:

“The increase in the number of girls' schools within the year has been remarkable. On the 30th April, 1862, only fifteen such schools were in existence in connection with this Department, and the number of scholars was reported at 530. At the same date in 1863 the number of schools had risen to 35 and the number of scholars had risen to 1,183. Both schools and scholars had doubled within a period of twelve months. The increase is entirely the result of native effort and may be traced directly to the growing influence of the young men who have received the advantages of a high University education in the different colleges throughout the country. It is a hopeful sign of real progress which it is well to note.”

One thing should be specially noted. The progress of female education was “entirely the result of native effort”. A band of highly educated Brahmo youngmen under the leadership of Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen organised a movement called “Antahpur Strisiksha”, or home education for women in 1862-63. Scholars included grown-up women. They read books according to the curriculum prepared by this body. The system of home education for women was referred to both in the annual report of the Bethune School as well as in the *Educational Report of*

1862-63. For the propagation of knowledge amongst Indian women Umesh Chandra Dutt, another young Brahmo, started the Bengali monthly *Bamabodhini Patrika* in August 1863. Thanks to the genuine efforts of the Bethune School, prejudices against women's education were fast disappearing, and zenana ladies even took to writing books.

We have a glimpse of the inner working of the Bethune School from the following extracts quoted in the *Report of 1863-64* from an account given by H. Woodrow, Inspector of Central Division :

“The school has enjoyed the advantage of excellent Head Mistresses, but after fifteen years of labour the results are scarcely such as to give encouragement. The girls marry at about 10 years of age and cease attendance just at the age when their progress is most apparent. The little girls when first admitted are excessively irregular, they absent themselves for every trifling reason and often without any reason at all. Consequently, as in all other girls' schools, much time is lost in the first two years, and the majority of the children are unable to read and understand even simple stories.” “All the girls in the school learn worsted work, and several needle work, and seem to use their fingers with facility.” “Only 21 girls out of 64 in attendance were accustomed to attach meaning to what they read. Some of the girls in the 4th class, but not all, knew the meanings of words. There are on the roll 26 girls in the first three classes, 13 in the 4th and 53 in the 5th and 6th. The last 53 girls never attempt to understand the meaning of their books. The girls above them are in an intermediate state, and only 26 girls, who form the three higher classes, have attained to such a moderate knowledge of reading as may be practically useful in the ordinary concerns of life. One quarter of 92 is 23, and therefore it is very near the mark to say that only a quarter of the girls know how to read a simple tale and understand its meaning.” “The children do not seem to be drawn from the rich classes of society; for the recent order that the children should pay for their books excited much opposition, and the hint that I gave of the expediency of imposing a small fee was unanimously opposed.” “The ‘*bhadra lok*’ (the respectable), not the ‘*dhani lok*’ (the rich), send their children to the Bethune School.” “The average cost to Government of each child in attendance to the Bethune School is about Rs. 10/- a month.”

The results gained were not proportionate to the expenditure incurred. The Government were set to think how to improve matters. By the year 1866-67, the number of girls' schools in connection with the Education department increased to about three

hundred and the number of scholars to about six thousand. Some schools began to charge fees from girls. In the Bethune School a monthly fee of one rupee was introduced in December 1866. With the increase in number both of schools and scholars it was felt necessary to start something like a normal school for training female teachers in Calcutta. A normal school for Christian women was already in existence. Miss Mary Carpenter, a philanthropic English lady and a friend of the Women's welfare movement, reached Calcutta on November 20, 1866 and stayed here for some time. She came in contact with such ardent advocates of women's education as Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chunder Sen, Monomohun Ghose and Dwijendra Nath Tagore and broached to them the necessity of a non-denominational normal school in the Metropolis. She prepared a scheme for the purpose. It was stated in the scheme that the Bethune School buildings should be used for the proposed normal school. A memorial was, accordingly, sent to the Government for necessary action. The Governmental machinery was set in motion. Vidyasagar being the Secretary of the Bethune School, his views on the subject were asked for. The Pandit was opposed to the proposal and advanced cogent reasons for his opposition in a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor on 1st October, 1867. As regards the proposed normal school he wrote:

"I need hardly assure you that I fully appreciate the importance and desirableness of having female teachers for female learners; but if the social prejudice of my countrymen did not offer an insuperable bar, I would have been the first to second the proposition and lend my hearty co-operation towards its furtherance. But when I see that success is by no means certain and that the Government is likely to place itself in a false and disagreeable position, I cannot persuade myself to support the experiment."

Vidyasagar did not fail to emphasise the importance of the Bethune School and in conclusion added:

"As regards the Bethune School, I entirely go with you that the results are not proportionate to the amount expended upon it, but at the same time I cannot recommend its abolition altogether. As a memento of the services to the cause of female enlightenment in India of the great philanthropist whose name the Institution bears, it has, I submit, a claim to the support of Government. In the next place, it is very desirable that there should be a well-organized female school in the heart of the metropolis, to serve as a model to sister institutions in the interior. The moral influence of the present institution in native society has been undoubtedly great. It has, in fact, paved the way to female education in surrounding districts

and this, in my humble opinion, is no mean return for the large sums which have been annually expended upon it. But I must say that there is great room for economy and improvement. The expenses, I think, can be reduced to nearly half the present amount without detriment to the efficiency of the Institution."

The Government, however, favoured Miss Carpenter's scheme. An opportunity for giving it a trial soon arose. I have said that a monthly fee was introduced for the first time in 1866. The number of pupils fell off considerably. For this and other reasons it was deemed necessary to institute an enquiry into the state of affairs in the school. At a special meeting of the Managing Committee held for the purpose in July, 1867, a Sub-Committee, consisting of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Kumar Harendra Krishna Deb and Prasanna Kumar Sarvadhikari, was appointed. The Sub-Committee met, enquired fully into the subject, and submitted their report on 24th September, 1867. This report disclosed the fact that 'gallery teaching had been neglected, the children were not well-taught, the promotions were not properly made, and that the distribution of the teaching agency had not been very judicious. The Bethune School Committee maintained that the school would not flourish as long as Miss Pigott was at its head.'

In its letter dated 3rd March, 1868 the Bengal Government, while concurring with the desirability of an early termination of the service of the Head Mistress, wrote to the Committee of the school as follows:

"I am to request at the same time that the Committee will be so good as not to proceed to the engagement of another Mistress without communicating with the Lieutenant-Governor. His Honour is disposed to think that the opportunity should be taken to render the building bequeathed by the late Mr. Bethune and the large annual grant from the general revenues which is now connected with it more useful in the promotion of female education than he believes it to be under present arrangements, and this end, the Lieutenant-Governor is led to believe, may be materially served by combining with a female school on a more moderate scale than the present one, a Normal School, for female teachers.

"If it is determined to utilize the Bethune School building and the funds connected with that building for such a purpose, it will be desirable to bring the whole institution into more close and direct connection with the Education Department than it is at present. The Lieutenant-Governor will be glad to know if in this event the Committee of native gentlemen who have hitherto, with an English President, conducted the affairs of the Bethune School, would be

willing to act as a Consultative Committee in co-operation with the Divisional Inspector of Schools."

The Committee refused to take part in the management of the institution in future if they were placed on the footing suggested and their Hony. Secretary, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, gave the following reply to the Bengal Government on 13th June, 1868:

"As regards the establishment of a Female Normal School, the Committee, in their letter to the Director of Public Instruction, have stated at length their views, and they desire me to forward a copy of the same for His Honour's information.

"The members of the Committee, I am desired to state, regret much their inability to act in the proposed Consultative Committee under the Divisional Inspector of Schools for the management of the Normal School."

The Lieutenant-Governor, before passing final orders in this important matter, desired the D.P.I. for a full expression of his opinion after consulting Mr. Woodrow, the Inspector of Schools, Central Division. The D.P.I. held that both economy and efficiency would be best ensured by combining the Normal School and the Bethune School in one institution under a single Superintendent, subject to the direct control of the Education Department.

The Lieutenant-Governor approved the scheme proposed by the Director. Mrs. Brietzche was, on 27th January, 1869, appointed Lady Superintendent of the Bethune and Normal Schools for three years on a salary of Rs. 300/- per month. The Bethune School Committee was dissolved in January 1869, and the D.P.I. conveyed thanks to the members of the Committee, specially to Vidyasagar, their able Secretary, for their past services.*

VII. THE NORMAL SCHOOL ADDED TO THE BETHUNE SCHOOL

The Normal School for training female teachers was thus ushered into being by the Government. As had been arranged it was housed in the Bethune School building. The Government of India sanctioned the expenditure of Rs. 12,000 per annum for the Normal School. The *Report on Public Instruction for 1868-69* described the new arrangements with regard to the Normal School as well as the Bethune School as follows:

* To write this chapter I have especially taken help from Sj. Brajendra Nath Banerji's article "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar as a Promoter of Female Education in Bengal," published in *Journal and Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, No. 3, 1927. In this connection also vide *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar* by Subal Chandra Mitra, pp. 189-94. Second Edition.

“The Bethune School has been placed on a new footing and is being reorganised as a Normal School for training native female teachers. It will include an adult class of native ladies besides the pupils who are to be trained as teachers and the ordinary school classes for children who will now be instructed entirely by Mistresses, Pandits being altogether excluded.”

The Normal School did not progress up to the expectation of the authorities, and the *Report on Public Instruction for 1869-70* had only these few words about it: “The attempt that has been made to get together a class of adults to be trained as teachers in the Bethune School, has at present met with no appreciable success.”

In the *Report* of the year following, too, we have no encouraging words about the Normal School:

“There is nothing new to record regarding the state of female education. The adult classes established in the Bethune School, Calcutta, for the training of female teachers, has not attracted pupils, and can scarcely be said to exist. The great natural obstacles to the existence of this class have not been lessened by the conduct of the present lady superintendent, who, after holding the post for more than two years, has recently announced that her religious convictions make her reluctant to give instruction to adult females in the secular elements of instruction, while she is debarred from imparting to them the precepts of morality under the sanction of the Christian religion. ‘There is little doubt’, remarks the inspector, ‘about the fate of an institution in which the conscientious head believes success to be a sin’; and he very pertinently adds, ‘It is unfortunate that the religious scruple was not felt before the appointment was accepted.’”

The Female Normal School continued for three years. In the latter half of this period Dwarkanath Ganguly, Editor of *Abalabandhab*, a Bengali monthly, devoted to women’s cause, worked earnestly to make the school a success. He even collected five or six adult pupils after strenuous exertions.* But under the circumstances all efforts proved unavailing. And the Government, too, could not rest satisfied with this state of affairs. The opinion of Vidyasagar with regard to the fate of such an institution proved prophetic. The Government passed orders for the abolition of the Normal School on 24th January, 1872, in a letter to the D.P.I. as follows:

“On a general review of the whole subject, it is clear that after a three years’ experiment the Female Normal School has unquestionably failed. It must necessarily have met with great difficulties.

* *Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar*, p. 194. Second Edition.

Another lady, to whom Mr. Woodrow proposed the post of Superintendent of the Normal School, declined the appointment on the same ground as Mrs. Brietzche, and no more likely person seems to be immediately available. The Lieutenant-Governor is himself too inclined to think that there is much in the view taken by the ladies most experienced in these matters, *viz.*, that it may be very dangerous to give women education and a certain freedom of action without the sanction of some religion. On the whole, therefore, under all the circumstances, the Lieutenant-Governor has determined to abandon the Government Female Normal School for the present. His Honour will prefer to give aid to any school maintained by private individuals or associations which really attract, and efficiently teach a sufficient number of adult female pupils, and especially pupils of a class likely to make good school mistresses in time.

“The Female Normal School will, therefore, be closed after the 31st January, 1872, and I am to submit, for the Lieutenant-Governor’s consideration, immediately proposals in regard to the Bethune School. The Government would be prepared to make liberal terms in conjunction with the leading native gentlemen interested in the school if some arrangement can be made to retain Mrs. Brietzche’s services.”

VIII. THE BETHUNE SCHOOL UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT WITH MONOMOHUN GHOSE AS SECRETARY

The Female Normal School being abolished, the Bethune School reverted to its former position. The school remained under the direct supervision of the Government for some time more. We find a fresh Managing Committee appointed in March, 1873. The *Bamabodhini Patrika*, a Bengali monthly, devoted to women’s cause, writes in its English supplement of Baisakh 1280 (April 1873) as follows:

“A Committee composed of the Hon’ble J. B. Phear, *President*, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Babu Peary Churn Sircar, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee and Mr. M. Ghose, *Secretary*, have been appointed by the Lieutenant Governor to take charge of the Bethune School. It is to be hoped that the institution will improve under the new management.”

This change has also been noticed in the *Report on Public Instruction for 1872-73* as follows:

“The Bethune School was withdrawn from the direct control

of the Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division, and has been placed in the hands of a special Committee appointed by Government. In other respects it seems to be much in the same state as heretofore but the Committee has submitted no report, and it does not appear what changes (if any) have been introduced by the new managers. It contained 85 girls at the end of the year, and its cost for the year to Government was Rs. 7,858/-."

The Committee had little time perhaps in the year to report on the new plans formulated for its improvement. The *Report on Public Instruction* for the year following gives an extract from the report of the Managing Committee which throws some light on the work the latter pursued. It says:

"The number of children upon the roll of the school at the present time is 72, but during the year it has been as high as 81. The Committee attributes the diminution in a great degree to the operation of the new rules, which makes the payment of an entrance fee of Rs. 2, and a monthly schooling fee of Rs. 2, compulsory in all cases, unless the Committee, for special reasons, otherwise orders. Although the native gentlemen of Calcutta have come to desire that the girls of their families should be instructed, they naturally prefer getting the instruction which they think sufficient for them, if they can get it gratuitously or on the payment of a small sum, instead of paying so substantial a fee as Rs. 2/- per month. And there are many schools in the neighbourhood of this place, maintained by missionaries or private enterprise, where a girl will be received and taught for as little as -/4/- as a month or even for nothing. The fact that the Bible necessarily has a prominent place in the course of a missionary school is not much regarded even by orthodox Hindus in the case of young children. Notwithstanding this consideration, the Committee has reason to think that the education afforded by the Bethune School is especially valued in the families of the upper classes of society in this city, and the numbers of the school will soon be increased."

Thus in 1873-74 we mark only one innovation. The entrance fee of Rs. 2/- was charged for the first time, and the monthly fee increased to Rs. 2/-. According to the *Report of 1874-75*, "there has been improvement in the regularity of attendance. The Committee also thinks itself justified in saying that the efficiency of the teaching has been increased, for the gentlemen who have been so kind as to conduct the late examinations, make very favourable comparison of the results attained in them, and the corresponding results in the previous year. The greatest progress, perhaps, has been made in Bengali, and this is doubtless in large measure attributable to the

exertions of the Pandit, whom the Committee found it necessary at the beginning of the year to add to the staff of school."

The Lady Superintendent of the School, Miss Heming, was about to leave the school for good on 15th April, 1875. The Committee made the following appreciative remarks on her service to the school:

"In the comparatively short period during which she has been at the head of the school, Miss Heming has earned the full confidence of the Committee by the efficiency with which she has discharged her duties, and the zeal which she has shown for the interest of the institution."

Even before the abolition of the Normal School, steps were being taken in the higher education of women by the Brahmo leaders of Calcutta. Keshub Chunder Sen had already started a female ✓ and adult normal school on 1st February, 1871. It was run on an improved standard and suited to the conditions of the Bengali society. Pleased with its management, the Government extended pecuniary help in the form of annual grants to the school. This school supplied teachers to the Bethune and other female schools in later days. A girls' school was also attached to this normal and adult school. The attainments of its alumni attracted notice of profound scholars like the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, Pandit (Later, Mahamahopadhyaya) Mahesh Chandra Nyayratna and Prasanna Kumar Sarbadhikari.

A particular reference should be made here of another school which has a direct bearing on the history of the Bethune School. This was the boarding school of Miss Annette Akroyd, called Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya, founded on November 18, 1873 at 22, Beniapukur Lane, Entally. Monomohun Ghose, Secretary to the Bethune School, also supported her cause. As a guest of Mr. Ghose, she came to be introduced to the elite of the city. In her enterprise she was greatly assisted by Durga Mohan Das, Dwarkanath Ganguly, Mrs. Phear and others. Dwarkanath Ganguly and Mrs. Phear were engaged in teaching work, the latter in an honorary capacity. On April 6, 1875, Miss Akroyd got married to Mr. Beveridge, the District Magistrate of Backergunge and an eminent historian, and though the school continued for one year more, it had to be closed for a short time in March, 1876. On 1st June, 1876, however, it was revived under the name of Banga Mahila Vidyalaya. This time, besides Durga Mohan and Dwarkanath, Ananda Mohan Bose, the first Indian Wrangler and a Barrister, also joined in this work of revival. The education imparted here was of a higher standard, its alumni following the course meant for the Entrance examination. The Banga Mahila Bidyalaya elicited praise from such high quarters as Lady Lytton.

The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal spoke very highly of this institution. It did not fail to attract notice of the Education Department. We find it stated about the school in the *Report on Public Instruction for 1876-77* as follows:

“The latter (Banga Mahila Bidyalaya) is in every sense the most advanced school in Bengal. It was formerly managed in Calcutta by Miss Akroyd, and lately revived by some Bengali gentlemen who desire to see girls appearing at the University examination and finishing their education at the new college for women at Cambridge. Mr. Grant found the first class consisting of two pupils, up to the standard of the second class of zillah schools in Euclid and Algebra; he considers that, as far as these subjects are concerned, there is no reason why they should not go up for the examination at the end of the year. The Managers are applying for a large grant, and the school unquestionably deserves encouragement. It is the first attempt to establish a higher English boarding school for girls, such as Mr. C. B. Clarke advocated some years ago. The teachers are English ladies, assisted by Pundits for Bengali.”

Among the prominent students of the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya, were Kadambini Bose (cousin of Monomohun Ghose and later wife of Dwarkanath Ganguly), Sarala Das and Abala Das—two daughters of Durga Mohan Das (later known as Mrs. P. K. Ray and Lady Abala Bose), Subarna Prabha Bose (sister of Sir J. C. Bose and wife of Mohini Mohan Bose). The two girls referred to in the above *Report* were Kadambini Bose and Sarala Das.

By the year 1876-77 a movement was afoot for remodelling the Bethune School. Justice Phear, President of its Managing Committee, left India in July, 1876. He left on record a letter containing proposals and suggestions for the improvement of the school. He pointed out that though the instruction given and the results achieved were as good as could reasonably be expected in an infant school, such as the Bethune, yet that the school was not sought after, that native gentlemen would not subscribe to the school, and that they even held the fee of Rs. 2/- a month (including conveyance to and from the school) to be an extravagant charge. Mr. Phear considered it to be established beyond question by the test of time that this modicum of instruction or education of the infant generation does not of itself lead to material gain or development of culture. The girls' schools of Carey, Ward and Marshman, were probably as efficient and as well filled with earnest pupils as the majority of those of the present day, yet the Bengali woman of the better orthodox classes is still (exceptions apart) pretty nearly as unlettered and as uninstructed as she was 70 years ago. Holding this view Mr. Phear was of opinion that it was

not right for Government to continue to spend large sums of money on infant education which was not previously demanded by the people, and the results of which were so trifling. The instruction of infants did little to promote the education of the adult female, while the members of the orthodox Hindu society would do nothing whatever to provide means to that end. He, therefore, urged the advisability of employing the revenues of the Bethune School in promoting the education of women. Mr. Phear also urged the Government, while leaving India, "to take up and carry on the work of the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya, an institution for the education of grown women." (*Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1876-77*).

The Government deferred the consideration of the subject till the end of the official year. Meanwhile, Sir Richard Garth, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, was added to the Managing Committee of the school as its President and Messrs. Reynolds and Mackenzie were taken in as its members.

The former Committee, however, 'had endeavoured to make the school more useful by opening, at the suggestion of Mrs. Tomkins, the Lady Superintendent, a cheaper school in the north wing of the building, called the Lower Bethune School, for the benefit of poor but respectable Hindu girls in the neighbourhood, who might be unable to pay the fee charged, and willing to walk to the school.' In the Government Resolution on the *Report of 1876-77*, we find: "The Bethune School in Calcutta shows some increase in number of pupils, and a lower school has been added to it for the benefit of the poor classes, but the school cannot be successful and its reorganisation on a wider basis is under the consideration of Government."

Before we narrate the story of its reorganisation let us have a peep into the progress the scholars of the Bethune School were making in their studies. The *Report for 1876-77* quotes from the remarks of the examiner thus:

"When I examined the school for the first time in 1870, and then again in 1873, there was not a single student who could write a few lines correctly in Bengali; while in the year 1876 there were two classes, consisting of 10 girls, who could express their ideas intelligently in writing and in tolerably correct Bengali. The examination of the first two classes in most of the subjects in which the answers were to be written in Bengali was therefore conducted by means of written papers, and the pupils were found sufficiently well up for such an examination." The *Report* next adds, 'While not wishing to lay undue stress on these facts, the examiner nevertheless thinks during the ensuing year, the school may have a higher class corresponding

to the vernacular scholarship standard* or even to the second class of the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya."

IX. THE STORY OF THE AMALGAMATION

The story of the amalgamation of the Bethune School with the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya is now told. It was admitted on all hands that the Bethune School required immediate improvement and re-organisation. That the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya was a higher type of school was also agreed. How these two could be amalgamated was now the question. We find it stated in the *Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1877-78* that 'on the 17th September last (1877) the Committee submitted to Government a lengthy report on the condition and management of the school and its proposed re-organisation, as called for by Government in March 1877.'

Monomohun Ghose, Secretary to the Bethune School Committee, was also connected with the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya. He played a very important part in the matter of amalgamation of these two institutions. It was mainly through his efforts that Sir Richard Garth, President of the Bethune School Committee, paid a visit to the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya. *The Brahmo Public Opinion* of 4th July, 1878, writes:

"The School attracted the notice of our excellent Chief Justice Sir Richard Garth who is the present President of the Bethune School Committee. Sir Richard himself paid a visit to the school and was highly pleased with the arrangements and the instruction imparted to the girls. The result was an offer from the Committee of the Bethune School to the Committee of the Bungo Mohila Vidyalaya for the amalgamation of the two Schools, which was accepted."

The visit of Sir Richard Garth hastened the amalgamation which came about on 1st August, 1878. *The Report on Public Instruction for 1878-79* writes:

"The amalgamation of the school with the Ballygunge Banga Mahila Vidyalaya has been effected since the date of the last report. The circumstances of the amalgamation are briefly as follows: In 1873 the last named school, which is described as a 'boarding school

* Of this as well as of the Woman Inspectress of Schools we find mention in the Government Resolution, dated 5th Dec., 1876 as follows:

"Female education has been encouraged by the foundation of scholarships for girls, and by the appointment of Mrs. M. Wheeler, daughter of the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, as inspectress of female schools and Zenana agencies." (*Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1875-76*).

upon the advanced principles of education', was established at Ballygunge, chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Justice Phear and some ladies of Calcutta.* In 1875† Mr. Phear, who was the President of the Bethune School Committee, was of opinion that the school would have a wider scope if the Ballygunge School was amalgamated with it; but as there were difficulties at the time in the way, it was not till the year under report that the plan could be carried out. The house at the Bethune School, formerly occupied by the Lady Superintendent, was re-arranged to accommodate the new pupils, and at the date of report there were 15 grown girls boarding at the school."

The Bethune School Managing Committee was expanded. Durga Mohan Das and Ananda Mohan Bose joined the Committee on behalf of the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya. Umesh Chandra Dutt, a Brahmo leader, Editor of *Bamabodhini Patrika* and also an efficient teacher, served this amalgamated institution for the latter half of 1878.

Since the amalgamation the Bethune School entered into a new phase. Hitherto no girl from either school ever appeared at the Entrance examination of the Calcutta University. Miss Chandramukhi Bose, daughter of Bhuban Mohan Bose, a native Christian of Dehra-Dun, prepared herself for the Entrance examination and wanted to appear at this in 1876 from the Dehra School for native Christian girls. She was given qualified permission to sit for the examination. The Junior Board of Examiners declared her to have attained the Entrance standard in the examination of 1876. But the authorities of the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya could not rest satisfied with this qualified recognition. They induced the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, to arrange for a test examination of two of their girls, Kadambini Bose and Sarala Das and when the latter succeeded in their test, the University had no reason to debar them from the ensuing Entrance examination. The Senate of the University in its meeting held on 27th April, 1878 resolved "That the female candidates be admitted to the University examination, subject to certain rules." These rules only referred to the conduct of the examination. Thus the first hurdle was crossed so far as the unqualified recognition of women's right to appear at the University examinations was concerned.

The reorganised Bethune School sent up for the first time Miss Kadambini Bose to sit for the Entrance examination of 1878. Miss Bose came out successful and was placed in the second division,

*There were others, too, such as, Durga Mohan Das and Dwarkanath Ganguly, who were instrumental in founding the school.

†It is a mistake; it should be 1876.

being short of one mark only. This was a historic event from the point of view of women's education in Bengal, nay in India, and elicited favourable comments in the Press and on the platform. The *Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1878-79* refers to this event together with the arrangements of scholarships, prizes, etc., for the successful candidate, in these glowing terms:

"The educational history of the year has been made noticeable, among other things, by the fact that a young Bengali lady has, for the first time passed one of the examinations of the University. A pupil of the Bethune School, Miss Kadambini Bose, competed at the Entrance examination with success, failing to obtain a place in the first division by one mark only. This young lady's success was mentioned with high approval by His Excellency the Viceroy on the occasion of the prize distribution at the school. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal also sanctioned the creation of a special junior scholarship (of Rs. 15/-) for Miss Bose's benefit, and she was presented with a prize of books, to the value of Rs. 60/-."

The *Report, inter alia*, mentions the success of three other pupils of the Bethune School at the Middle Scholarship examination. Two of them passed in English, the third in the vernacular only. They were Kamini Sen (later, Mrs. Kamini Roy), Abala Das (later, Lady Abala Bose) and Subarna Prabha Bose. Miss Kadambini Bose, besides the Government scholarship, also obtained the Hitakari scholarship, awarded by the Hitakari Sabha of Uttarpara, District Hooghly. Miss Bose's success at the Entrance examination was very handsomely mentioned by Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, in his address at the Convocation held on March 15, 1879. His actual words are:

"In connection with the examination of the past year, I must not omit to mention a circumstance which is both interesting and important. I refer to the fact of the Senate having passed rules for the examination of female candidates, under the operation of which one Hindu young lady, educated at the Bethune School, passed the Entrance Examination with great credit. The young lady to whom I refer, Kadambini Bose, obtained very high marks in Bengali, very tolerable marks in History; and even in exact sciences—a subject which is not usually considered to be congenial to the female intellect—she acquitted herself very creditably. She only missed being placed in the First Division of passed candidates for the Entrance Examination by a single mark."

Besides the above prizes and scholarships, Kumar Rajendra Narayan Roy of Bhowal made the gift of a gold medal and several appropriate books to Miss Kadambini Bose, for her success

at the Entrance examination. The distribution of prizes by His Excellency the Viceroy, referred to in the above *Report*, had taken place early in March, 1879. At a special meeting held for distributing the Bhowal prizes Sir Richard Garth, President of the Bethune School Committee, addressed Kadambini as follows:

“You have already been honoured by the commendations of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and by the more substantial reward which he has conferred on you and I hope and believe that the present which you are now asked to accept at my hands from a gentleman of high rank and position of Dacca, is only an additional proof of the interest which the more enlightened of your own countrymen are taking in your career and as shewing how much native gentlemen, although they may not belong to the same religious sect as yourself, appreciate the good sense and determined energy which have induced you to continue to improve your mind and to prosecute your studies so much longer and more successfully than the generality of your countrywomen.” (*The Brahmo Public Opinion*, Sept. 4, 1879.)

The special scholarship proposed by the Lieutenant-Governor to Miss Kadambini Bose was but conditional. That is, it would be tenable by her for two years if she continued her studies in the First Arts. There being no women's college at the time and Miss Bose expressing her willingness to prosecute further studies, it was imperative on the part of the Government to open either a college for women or college classes in the Bethune School, the only Government institution of women in Calcutta. It should be mentioned that the Government opened another institution for girls in Dacca under the name of the Eden Female School in June 1878. The Government thought it prudent to take to the latter course and college classes were opened in the Bethune School early in 1879. The *Report* of 1878-79 makes the following reference to the subject:

“In consequence of the success of Miss Kadambini Bose, and in accordance with her desire to continue her studies to the First Arts examination, the Lieutenant-Governor consented to the proposal to raise the status of the school by appointing a Lecturer qualified to teach the First Arts course. With this object Baboo Sasi Bhusan Dutt, M.A., was transferred from the Cuttak College, and his time is now fully engaged at the Bethune School.”

With the passing of the Entrance examination by Miss Kadambini Bose, a new career was opened for the institution founded by Bethune, and women's education got a fresh impetus in this part of India.

PART II

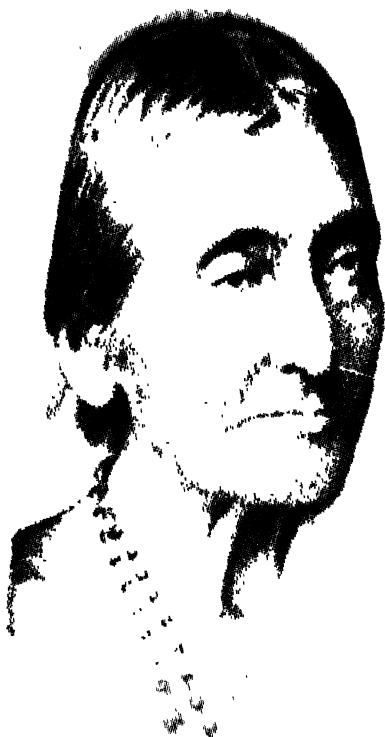
I. THE REORGANISED BETHUNE SCHOOL WITH COLLEGE CLASSES (1879-87)

No separate college was started. The college classes were attached to the Bethune School till 1888. The establishment of the school was strengthened since the close of the official year 1878-79. Better accommodation was provided for the boarders, by their removal to the school house, and by additions to the school. The net grant to the school was raised from Rs. 650/- to Rs. 750/- a month.

The college classes opened with only one student, Miss Kadambini Bose, in the First Year Arts. Miss Chandramukhi Bose seized the opportunity and got herself admitted into the Free Church Normal School where she pursued her First Arts course. It was the general rule that no one except those of Hindu nationality could enter the Bethune School. But should this rule be enforced in the college classes also? In March 1880 the Lieutenant-Governor sanctioned the admission to the college class of Miss Ellen D'Abreu who passed the Entrance examination in December, 1879. "By the admission of Miss D'Abreu, the question has been decided as to the admission to the new college classes of other than Hindu girls. At the same time Government rejects an application for the admission to the school department of a pupil who was not of Hindu nationality." Besides, the Government also stipulated that "no girl should be admitted to the college classes who has not passed the Entrance examination, and who was not prepared to continue her studies for the First Arts examination." (*Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, for 1879-80*).

Like the Bethune School the Free Church Normal School had casual college classes. Both sent up girls to the First Arts examination. Miss Chandra Mukhi Bose from the Normal School passed the F.A. in the second division and Miss Kadambini Bose from the Bethune School, in the third. In 1881 both were reading in the college classes of the Bethune School for the degree examination. Special scholarships of Rs. 25/- and Rs. 20/- a month respectively were awarded to them for that purpose. The Bethune School sent up three candidates for the Entrance examination, and the Free Church Normal School one. Two of the candidates from the Bethune School were successful—Kamini Sen, later, the poet

*EARLIEST STUDENTS OF
THE BETHUNE SCHOOL*



KUNDAMALA DEVI
(1810)



SODAMINI DEVI
(1851)

PIONEERS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN BENGAL



PANDIT ISWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR
Secretary of the Bethune School (1856—1868)



MONOMOHHUN GHOSH
Secretary of the Bethune School (1873—1896)



UMESH CHANDRA DUTT



ANANDA MOHAN BOSE

Members of the Bethune School Managing Committee

Mrs. Kamini Roy) passing in the first division, and Subarna Prabha Bose in the second. The former began preparing herself for the First Arts examination. The Director of Public Instruction mentioned in his *Report for 1880-81* that

“It is only fair to remark that, though these young ladies all came up from Calcutta schools, they are not natives of Calcutta; and Eastern Bengal especially claims a large share of the honour of their success. The example which they have set will not be thrown away; indeed we hear already of other schools following the lead of the Bethune and the Free Church Normal Schools, though these have secured the distinction of being the pioneers of the higher education in Bengal.”

The instructing staff of the Bethune School was strengthened by the addition to it of Miss Radharani Lahiri as Second Mistress. She was a niece of the famous Ramtanu Lahiri. A student of Keshub Chunder Sen's Native Female Normal and Adult School, she acquired proficiency in general knowledge and got herself trained in the art of teaching.

It had been a rule with the Bethune School not to entertain students in its English classes without the previous permission of their parents or guardians. Since its amalgamation with the Banga Mahila Bidyalaya, the Bethune School became a full-fledged secondary school. The above rule, therefore, could not now hold good. And we find in 1881-82 that out of 100 pupils in the school department, 58 were reading English and seven a classical language, presumably Sanskrit. In the college department there were six students, three of whom were preparing for the B.A. and three for the F.A. examination. One of them took up Latin, one Persian and one Sanskrit, as a second language.

There was yet another difficulty to overcome. No women candidates had hitherto applied to the Medical College for admission in order to prosecute their studies in Medical science. Miss D'Abreu passed the F.A. examination in January, 1881 and Miss Abala Das the Entrance examination in the previous December from the Bethune School, with the first grade scholarships of Rs. 25/- and Rs. 20/- respectively. An application was made on their behalf to the Council of the Medical College in Calcutta for admission to this institution. But it met with such determined opposition that the proposal was for the time dropped. Madras proved to be more liberal in this respect. Not baffled with the opposition at home, they joined the Madras Medical College where provision existed for the superior instruction of women in medicine. Leaders of the progressive school who were also ardent advocates of women's education, now set to

think how this drawback in the Medical education of women in Bengal could be removed.

The Director of Public Instruction in his *Report for 1881-82* made special note of the progress women were making in higher education. The contribution of the Bethune School in its school and college departments towards this could not be over-estimated. The *Report* states:

“Chandramukhi Bose and Kadambini Bose, after passing the First Arts examination, are completing their studies for the B.A. degree. . . Ellen D’Abreu has joined the Madras School of Medicine with a first grade senior scholarship. The Bethune School sent up three candidates to the Entrance Examination, two of whom, Abala Das and Kumudini Khastagiri, were successful, both passing in the second division. They were granted junior scholarships of Rs. 20/- and Rs. 15/- respectively. Abala Das has since joined the Madras Medical College; the other is reading for the First Arts examination. Lilian H. Smith, educated privately by Miss Arakiel at Berhampore, and Nirmalabala Mookerjea, of the Free Church Normal School, were also successful at the Entrance examination, and gained respectively junior scholarships of Rs. 15/- and Rs. 10/- a month. They are now reading for the First Arts examination, as also is Miss Kamini Sen, who passed the Entrance examination in the previous year.”

The number of pupils of the Bethune School increased to 114 in 1882-83, including those of the college classes. Of these four were matriculated students of the University. All of them were preparing for the F.A. examination. Out of 110 pupils in the school department, 54 were reading English and 12 a classical language. The most important event of this session as also in the history of female education in Bengal was the success of Kadambini Bose and Chandramukhi Bose of the College department of the Bethune School in the B.A. examination in January, 1883. Chandramukhi Bose preferred to continue higher studies in M.A. But Kadambini Bose, (now Mrs. Ganguly being married, on 12th June, 1883, to the Brahmo leader Dwarkanath Ganguly) forsook the beaten track and applied to the authorities of the Calcutta Medical College for admission as a regular student of the college. During the previous year Miss D’Abreu and Miss Abala Das had both been refused permission for studies in the college. Now the Brahmo leaders headed by Dwarkanath Ganguly started an agitation for opening the precincts of the Medical College to women. But before this movement could gather momentum, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Rivers Thompson, intervened. He took into consideration the difficulties

suggested by the Medical College and decided that no sufficient reasons existed for the exclusion of duly qualified young ladies from the study of medicine in the institution. This decision was given immediate effect to by allowing Kadambini Ganguly to enter the Medical College. The decision of the Lieutenant-Governor was couched in the Government Resolution of the 29th June, 1883. Since the resolution was rightly considered a landmark in the history of women's education in this part of India we make no apology to quote extensively from it. The Resolution pointed out that,

Already these provinces have suffered from the Council's failure to take a broad and unprejudiced view on this question; for the Lieutenant-Governor learns to his regret that some Bengali ladies, fully qualified by educational attainments for admission to the College, have had to betake themselves to the more liberal Presidency of Madras, there to prosecute those Medical studies from which the Council of the Calcutta Medical College had excluded them. It is, in Mr. Rivers Thompson's opinion, clearly opposed to the public good, as well as to legitimate private interests, that such a state of things should continue, and that the educational system of Bengal, progressive in other respects, should be illiberal and retrograde in this. Illiberality here has great and numerous evil consequences. It encourages zenana prejudices, and it strengthens the barriers of caste; and it suppresses the natural and reasonable aspirations of Indian ladies to enter a profession which would find, in India of all countries in the world, a wide sphere of action and of beneficent service. Everyday that passes widens our knowledge of the fact that among the native community there are women in every position of life who would prefer death to treatment by a male physician, and the misery caused by neglected and unskilfully treated illness must be widespread and most lamentable. There is but one way by which this suffering can be relieved, and that is by medical education of females; for, in the present conditions of Indian life, it would be useless to wait, till opposition based upon prejudices (if such they can be called) is removed. The Lieutenant-Governor, therefore, considers it his duty to support this movement; and he looks on the objections which have been made to it, on the ground of the difficulty of teaching mixed classes, or the alleged inaptitude of the females for the profession of medicine, as unsubstantial and obsolete. Experience gained in Europe, in America, and in Madras has shown that mixed classes can be taught without any bad results; while the aptitude of women for the study and profession of medicine is, in the Lieutenant-Governor's opinion, no longer open to discussion or doubt. Even if the aptitude of women for the profession of medicine

were still an open question, it would be an inadequate objection here, for the fitness or unfitness of women to practise medicine can only be proved by experience. The issue therefore is, shall it be put to that proof in Bengal? The ladies who apply for admission to the College will be the only losers if they fail in the trial; the community will be great gainers if they succeed. For his own part the Lieutenant-Governor has no doubt they will succeed far beyond the expectations of their most sanguine supporters, and he looks forward to a not distant time when Calcutta hospitals shall be partly officered by lady doctors. And if the success of the pupils be established in the capital, there is no reason why our medical schools in the provinces should not afford opportunities for a more general extension of the policy, with incalculable advantage to the country."

The Bethune School both in its school and college departments began to prosper. In 1883-84 the number of pupils in the school department was 112 and in the college department 5. It should be noted that the matriculated students of the Free Church Normal School and one or two others—all resorted to the college department of the Bethune School. And it was from here that the students of the Medical College were recruited. Of the five students in the college department two were in the second year class and three in the third. A fourth student joined the third year class after the close of the year, having passed the supplementary examination in May. The *Report on Public Instruction for 1883-84* took note of the progress made by young Bengali ladies in higher education as follows:

"Of the young ladies who have taken the lead among the more highly educated women of Bengal, Kadambini Bose (now Mrs. Ganguli) who took the B.A. degree in January 1883, is studying medicine in the Calcutta Medical College; and Chandra Mukhi Bose, who has taken the M.A. degree with honours in English, has recently been appointed a teacher in the college classes of the Bethune School. Ellen D'Abreu and Abala Das who passed the First Arts and Entrance examinations respectively from the Bethune School in January 1882, have since joined the Madras Medical College; and their original scholarships having expired, His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has granted them scholarships of Rs. 20/- a month tenable to the end of their college course. Virginia Mary Mitter and Bidhu Mukhi Bose, who joined the Calcutta Medical College after passing the First Arts examination, have been granted special medical scholarships of Rs. 20/- a month tenable for five years. . . . Nirmalabala Mookerjee, who passed the First Arts examination in the first division, was also awarded a first grade senior scholarship, and is now reading in the Bethune School for the B.A. degree.

Kamini Sen was awarded the scholarship vacated by Virginia Mitter on joining the Medical College. She is also reading in the third year class of the Bethune School, together with Kumudini Khastagiri and Priyatama Dutt, the latter of whom passed the supplementary F.A. examination held in May, 1884. The second year class is composed of Labanya Prava Bose and Bindu Basini Bose, the latter of whom (like Nirmalabala Mookerjee) passed the Entrance examination from the Free Church Normal School. No native girls were successful at the Entrance examination held in December last."

There was not much worth mentioning in the year following except the fact that the numerical strength of the school department rose in 1884-85 to 124 and that of the college classes to 6. None of the pupils appeared at the University examinations during this session. The school, however, was growing popular, as we find in the following year the number of students increased to 142. Three pupils appeared at the Entrance examination of April, 1886, and one of them, Saralabala Ghosal, passed in the second division. Saralabala Ghosal was Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, famous in later days, for her national and social activities. Of the three candidates from the Bethune School for the B.A. degree, Kamini Sen passed with honours in Sanskrit, and Priyatama Dutt took the ordinary degree.

In 1886-87, the number of students in the school department fell to 119. The falling off was entirely confined to the junior classes. The Lady Superintendent attributed this to the establishment of the Victoria College on the Circular Road. The college department had four students. Two students who sat for the F.A. examination were unsuccessful. All the four pupils appearing at the Entrance examination, however, passed, and three of them won junior scholarships. During this session Miss F. A. Lepscombe, the Lady Superintendent, resigned, and some new arrangements had to be made, so far as the instructing staff were concerned. Miss Chandramukhi Bose and Miss Radharani Lahiri, already on the staff, were appointed respectively the Lady Superintendent and the Assistant Lady Superintendent, their initial salary in these new posts being Rs. 150/- and Rs. 100/-. These appointments were at first temporary. They were soon made permanent. Miss Kamini Sen and Miss Sarala Mahalanabis were taken on the staff as assistant teachers. The management remained the same, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court being the President and Monomohun Ghose, Bar-at-Law, Secretary.

The numerical strength of the school department remained almost stationary in 1887-88. Two girls appeared at the Entrance examination and passed in the first division with scholarships. The

college department underwent a radical change during the session. The number of students rose from six to eleven being distributed thus: M.A. class, 1; third year class, 3; second year class, 5; and first year class, 2. It was now deemed prudent to separate the college department of the school into a full-fledged college. The college constituted as such was affiliated to the Calcutta University in Arts up to the B.A. standard in February 1888. In previous years, candidates passing the B.A. examination from this institution were admitted to the degree by special grace of the Senate. But from now on, this drawback was altogether removed and a new institution under the name of the Bethune College came into being. The school retained its original name and status, though the management of both remained the same. Miss Chandramukhi Bose became the first Principal of the Bethune College. Miss Kamini Sen joined the school as second mistress, the Head Mistress being Miss Radharani Lahiri.

The *Report* of 1887-88 thus summarises the achievements of the Bethune School in both the departments:

“During the past eight years the institution has passed 6 candidates at the B.A., 6 at the F.A. and 12 at the Entrance examination. Two of the graduate students are now in the instructing staff, Miss Chandramukhi Bose, M.A., being the Lady Superintendent, and Miss Kamini Sen, B.A., second mistress in the school department. The Government of Bengal has recently transferred to the committee a sum of Rs. 15,900, being a portion of the amount originally subscribed for perpetuating the memory of the founder.”

One thing should be specially noted here. We have seen that the college department of the Bethune School fed the Medical College so far as its women students were concerned. Mrs. Kadam-bini Ganguli, who had taken her B.A. degree from the Bethune School, was the first lady to complete her course and to enter in the Medical College as a regular student. She went up for the final examination in March, 1888 but unfortunately failed in the single subject of medicine. She had, however, passed the special certificate examination for women. She commenced practice with that qualification. The two fourth year students, Miss Virginia Mitter and Miss Bidhumukhi Bose, went up for the first M.B. examination of 1888, and both passed, the former heading the list of successful candidates.

The Campbell Medical School, too, opened its doors to girl students in 1887-88. Orders were issued to this effect by the Government of Bengal in November, 1887. To be eligible for admission it was laid down that the candidates must have passed the upper

primary examination, or a special examination to be held by the teachers of the school in Bengali reading and dictation and in arithmetic up to fractions and the rule of three. The course of instruction was to extend over three years, and to be the same as of male students. No fees were to be charged and scholarships and other prizes were established on a liberal scale. Special accommodation was provided for the female students, together with an omnibus to bring them to and from the school. Maharani Swarnamayee had contributed the sum of one lakh and fifty thousand rupees, with which a hostel for women medical students was built in the compound of the Medical College. This was occupied for the first time in 1886-87. In this hostel, now known as Swarnamayee Hostel, students from a distance were also allowed to reside.

When Bethune had started the institution under his name, he had dreamt of a future which appeared utopian to many. But in the course of forty years of its existence the institution prospered so much that what was once dismissed as utopian, actually came to be a reality. The highest type of education that was obtainable in India, nay in any country at the time, could be had in this institution. The ideal of progress it had set, could not be withheld, and the closed doors of the Medical College had to be opened for the reception of the students of Bethune's institution. Bethune died a premature death. But those who came after him, held the torch aloft and conducted the institution with renewed zeal and vigour.

II. PROGRESS OF THE BETHUNE COLLEGE AND THE BETHUNE COLLEGIATE SCHOOL FURTHER REVIEWED (1888-97)

Since the affiliation of the college department to the Calcutta University the institution came to be known as the Bethune College and the school proper as the Bethune Collegiate School. The reputation which the Bethune School had obtained in both its departments, was maintained even after the college and school were separated. The college had thirteen students on its rolls. In 1889 two girls out of the three sent up passed the First Arts examination and gained senior scholarship.

The students of the school numbered 136, being an increase by fifteen over the previous year. I find the students classified in this year's *Report* for the first time as 44 Hindus, 87 Brahmos and 5 Christians. It is not clear how these Christians were admitted because only students of Hindu nationality were allowed admission. The school passed four candidates in 1889. One of them held a junior

scholarship. Special classes for drawing and music as well as needle work were started in this session.

We have already seen that the college classes of the Bethune School supplied students to the Calcutta Medical College. Besides Kadambini Ganguli, Virginia Mary Mitter and Bidhumukhi Bose, two other students of its college department, had got themselves admitted into the Medical College. In the year following they passed their final M.B. examination with credit. The *Report on Public Instruction for 1889-90* mentions this as the most noticeable event in the history of female education in Bengal. Another young lady succeeded in the Preliminary Scientific L.M.S. examination.

During this session, 1889-90, the college did very well in the University examination. In 1890 four students presented themselves at the F.A. examination and three came out successful, whilst in the B.A. all three who appeared passed, obtaining second class Honours in English. They were Ethel Raphael, Sarat Chakrabarty and Sarala Ghosal. Sarala Ghosal was the first recipient of the Padmavati Gold Medal instituted by Dr. Raslibehari Ghose in memory of his mother Sreemati Padmavati. In 1888 Dr. Ghose placed a sum of money in the hands of the University of Calcutta, from the interest of which this medal was to be awarded annually at the convocation to the lady graduate obtaining the highest marks. The college had thirteen pupils on its rolls.

The numerical strength of the school remained the same as in the previous year. Of these 44 students were Hindus, 87 Brahmos, and 5 Christians. They included a child-wife and a child-widow. Three out of four candidates passed the Entrance examination. The school had a boarding department. For lack of accommodation the number of boarders had never exceeded twenty. Provisional arrangements being made for housing more boarders, their number increased to thirty-eight, this year. The boarding house was also open to the college students. Proposals for constructing a separate building for their accommodation were afoot. The Entrance class of the school was the largest on record, numbering fifteen girls. A considerable sum was spent for the purchase of new books in the library. This year regular provision was also made for the physical exercise of the boarders.

In 1890-91 some changes were effected in the instructing staff of the Bethune College and School. Miss Kamini Sen, B.A., who had been the second mistress of the school, was promoted to the college as third lecturer. Miss Kumudini Khastagir, B.A., was appointed second mistress in her place. Both were students of the college. Miss Radharani Lahiri still remained the Head Mistress of

the school. There was nothing particular to record this session except the fact that one candidate passed the B.A. and four the F.A. examination from the Bethune College. The college had 15 pupils on the 31st March, 1891, of whom 7 belonged to the first year, 4 to the second, 2 to the third, and 2 to the fourth year class. Some innovations were effected during the session. A commodious house was built during the year for the better accommodation of boarders. The Managing Committee prepared a set of new rules for the guidance of the boarders and staff. The special classes for drawing and music in the school were continued. The pupils were allowed to sit for the various public standard examinations from lower primary up to the Entrance. Five girls went up for the Entrance examination this year of whom four were successful. Hemchandra Mitra of Calcutta offered Rs. 500/- for the foundation of an annual prize to be awarded to the best girl of the school at the Entrance examination.

In the year following the students of the college increased to twenty. This was a sure proof that the cause of higher education of women was making steady progress. Results of the F.A. examination were satisfactory, four out of six having passed in 1892. Two of the successful candidates, Matilda Cohen and Rachel Cohen, were placed in the first division. Matilda stood so high as eighth in the competition list. These two gained special scholarships, one of Rs. 25 and the other of Rs. 20 a month. The students did not fare so well in their B.A. Only one out of three passed and that also in the pass course. The candidate who passed was Miss Priyambada Bagchi, later the famous Bengali poetess Priyambada Devi. From the Report of the collegiate school we learn that "the Bethune School had 127 pupils, against 108 in the preceding year. . . . It consists of both day-scholars and boarders. 59 of the pupils are Hindus, 59 Brahmos, and 9 Native Christians. The school passed three girls out of six and four out of five in standards VI and IV respectively at the last girls' scholarship examinations. Seven girls competed at the Entrance examination in February last (1892) of whom two only were successful."

There was nothing outstanding to record in 1892-93 about the college and the collegiate school. The college had twenty students, of whom, according to Miss Chandramukhi Bose, now designated "Lady Principal," four were casual pupils, "who study in the college on certain congenial subjects unfettered by the requirements of the University test." Boarders numbered 27, including pupils both of the school and the college. A tennis-ground and a gymnasium were prepared for them. They took advantage of these regularly. A

silver medal by Kumar Rameswar Mallick of Howrah for proficiency in Sanskrit was awarded to Miss Priyambada Bagchi who had graduated in the previous year, and had been since married. During the session His Highness the Maharajah of Gwalior visited the college, and gave it a donation of Rs. 500. A visit was also paid to it by Mr. Premchand Raychand of Bombay, who presented the girls with a donation of Rs. 100. In 1893 six pupils appeared at the F.A. and five at the B.A. examination, of whom five and three respectively passed. The school henceforth stopped sending up girls for examinations other than the Entrance. Among the candidates sent up for the Entrance examination only two passed this year.

The session 1893-94 was memorable in the annals of the Bethune College and School for more than one reason. Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the first Secretary of the Bethune School and an ardent advocate and lifelong supporter of women's education, breathed his last on July 29, 1891. To perpetuate the great Pandit's memory a body of Hindu ladies of Calcutta raised the sum of Rs. 1,670 and placed it in the hands of the Committee of Management of the Bethune College and School. This was done publicly on 5th March, 1894 in the presence of H.E. the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Lord Elgin, and many other notable European and Indian gentlemen. The Committee of Management disposed of the amount in the manner indicated in the following:

"The Committee beg to announce that they have recently received the sum of Rs. 1,670 from the Secretary to the Ladies' Vidyasagar Memorial Committee in Calcutta, for the establishment of an annual scholarship tenable for two years to be awarded to a Hindu girl who after passing the annual examination in the third class of the school, desires to prepare herself for the University Entrance examination. The late Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar was the co-adjutor and fellow-worker of Mr. Bethune, when the school was founded, and since then continued, so long as he lived, to take the keenest interest in its welfare. It is, therefore, a source of great gratification to the Committee to find that a body of Hindu ladies in Calcutta should have interested themselves in this manner to perpetuate the memory of the late Pandit Vidyasagar who, during his lifetime, in addition to the philanthropic work to which he devoted his whole life, had done so much to promote female education in Bengal."

During the session the Bethune College had thirteen pupils in all its four classes. In 1894 one student passed the F.A. examination and one the B.A. with honours in Sanskrit. This year the Padmavati Medal was awarded at the convocation of the University to Miss

Surabala Ghose, B.A. The number of boarders on the 31st March, 1894 stood at 33 as against 27 in the previous year. The tennis-ground was more or less utilised. Good health and good conduct prevailed in the college throughout the year.

The Bethune Collegiate School did satisfactorily in this session. The number of pupils was 138 as against 125, of whom 70 were Hindus, 55 Brahmos, and 13 Native Christians. It was a good sign, so says the *Report*, that the Hindus resorted to the school in larger numbers than previously, as it was originally started for them. The institution no longer sent up candidate for the special Bengali standard examination for girls' schools in Calcutta. In fact none of its pupils had appeared for the examinations in the two previous years. The school sent up seven candidates for the Entrance examination of whom six were successful.

A consideration of the state of women's education on this side of India shows that the movement for the higher education for women had taken firm root in the soil. Almost simultaneously with the Bethune School, the Free Church Normal School commenced to send up girls for the Entrance examination. The Victoria College was revived and reconstituted as a secondary school in 1886. In 1887-88 the Eden Female School of Dacca was recognised as a high school although two years previously we find one Bimala Gupta appearing from this institution, perhaps as a private candidate, at the Entrance examination. The Christ Church School and the Brahmo Balika Sikshalaya were two new additions to the high schools in Calcutta. The former is found to send up girls for the Entrance examination in 1890-91. The Brahmo Balika Sikshalaya, founded on 16th May, 1890, was the only unaided high English School for girls. As regards University education, the college classes of the Bethune School, and later the Bethune College served the purpose as a regular institution. It was but casually that the Free Church Normal School sent up candidates for the First Arts examination. Now, in 1893-94, along with the Bethune College we find La Martiniere School for Girls and Loreto House preparing girls for the University examination in Arts. Each of these latter institutions had three students. They were, however, all Europeans. The doors of the Calcutta Medical College and the Campbell School had already been opened to women. Their success at the highest medical examination showed that women could compete with men in this branch of studies. Thus women's education in Arts and medical science was progressing satisfactorily.

In the following session (1894-95) there was some change in the staff of the college and school. On her marriage Miss Kamini,

Sen, B.A. resigned her appointment as lecturer. She was succeeded by Miss Kumudini Khastagir, B.A., appointed Head Mistress of the Collegiate School since 1893 on the retirement of Miss Radharani Lahiri. Provision was made for lecturers in Persian and Arabic in order to meet the requirements of students from the North-Western Province now known as the Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) and the Punjab. Three out of five examinees passed the F.A. examination in 1895. None could pass the B.A.

The number of boarders rose from 33 to 44, and it was a happy sign of the times that Hindu girls resorted to the boarding house in larger number. There was not much new to record about the collegiate school except the fact that the number of students this year decreased to 128. Six girls appeared at the Entrance examination, of whom three passed, one in the first division and two in the second. The first of these, Snehalata Majumdar, gained a first grade junior scholarship.

The Bethune College had twenty-one girls on its rolls in 1895-96. It was recorded that there were two Hindu girls, one in the first year and the other, a child-widow, in the second year class. Four candidates out of seven girls sent up, succeeded in the F.A. examination of 1896, and one out of two passed the B.A. The music class was conducted by Miss Amala Das, sister of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, noted as a singer. She taught the girls Bengali singing without any remuneration. The collegiate school had 132 pupils on its rolls, against 128 in the preceding year. It has already been noticed that the school did not teach the special standards prescribed for girls' schools in Calcutta, but confined itself exclusively to the high school course. The school fared very well in the Entrance examination. Three girls were sent up, all of whom passed, one being placed in the first division and two in the second. The attached boarding house had 40 students, of whom 33 were reading in the school.

The Bethune College as also the Collegiate School did well in the University examinations of 1897. Seven candidates passed their First Arts, of whom two were placed in the first division. Of these two, Miss Snehalata Majumdar received the first grade senior scholarship. Miss Sarala Sen came out successful in the B.A. examination with second class honours in Mathematics. During the session, 1896-97 there were twenty-one girls on the rolls of the college. Among the girls sent up by the school, six succeeded, two being placed in the first division, two in the second and two in the third. The First Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal, covering the years between 1892-93 and 1896-97, tells us

that 20 candidates at the F.A. and 6 at the B.A. examination passed from the Bethune College, two of the latter having secured Honours. Twenty pupils passed from the collegiate school at the Entrance examination. The boarding house contained forty members, belonging to the college as well as the collegiate school. A fortnightly course of lectures mainly for the benefit of ladies in the zenana on various useful subjects was organised as part of the college extension scheme, at the instance of Rev. P. C. Mazumder.

This year the institution—both college and school—lost its Secretary Mr. Monomohun Ghose, Bar-at-Law, who died at Krishnagar, Nadia, on the 17th October, 1896, under tragic circumstances. He held the post of Honorary Secretary for a little over twenty-three years, being appointed in March, 1873. During this period the institution underwent radical changes. Almost from a nursery school it rose to be a first grade college, and it was through the unstinted exertions of Monomohun Ghose that such a transformation was possible. He was an ardent advocate of women's education and helped Miss Akroyd (later known as Mrs. Beveridge), in 1873, in her endeavours to open a boarding school where education of a higher type was to be imparted to girls. He was instrumental in effecting the amalgamation of Banga Mahila Bidyalaya with the Bethune School in 1878. Since then the progress of this institution continued unabated. When Monomohun Ghose died, the institution had already turned into a centre of higher studies where girls could read up to their M.A. It was in the fitness of things that the staff and students of this institution assembled in a meeting under the presidency of Sir Gooroodas Banerji in its own hall on November 16, 1896 and resolved to make suitable arrangements for the perpetuation of his memory.

By now prejudice against women's education had almost gone. I have referred to the large number of schools—primary, middle and secondary, instituted for the education of our girls. It was due to the liberality and large-heartedness of our countrymen that most of them could see the light of day. The Government maintained only two institutions—the Bethune College with its School department in Calcutta and the Eden Female School at Dacca. In its career of almost half a century, the institution founded by Bethune had served to revolutionise the ideas of our countrymen so far as women's position in society as well as their capacities and responsibilities were concerned. It not only prepared girls to shoulder their household duties but it also sent forth teachers, doctors, litterateurs, poets and journalists from among its promising students. Even politics did not fail to draw upon this

treasure-house. Mrs. Kadambini Ganguli, the first medical graduate lady in India to embark upon the career of healing, stood in the open Congress of 1890 at Calcutta to offer a vote of thanks to the President of the session. She was the first woman to speak from the Congress platform. Mrs. Annie Besant in her famous book *How India Wrought for Freedom* made handsome reference to this event. She mentioned it as 'a symbol that India's freedom would uplift India's womanhood'.

With the death of Monomohun Ghose, its Honorary Secretary and the departure early in October (1896) of its President the Chief Justice Sir William Corum Petharum for England, some change was effected in the management of the institution. Janaki Nath Ghosal, the famous Congressman and public-spirited worker in our national cause, became the Secretary and the Chief Justice Sir Francis Maclean took up the presidentship after his arrival in November, 1896.

III. RAPID STRIDES IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION

vis-a-vis The Bethune School & College (1898-1907)

Women's education underwent re-orientation in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Bethune Vidyalaya (now both school and college) gave rise to an impulse amongst our people for the higher education of women. But the education imparted here was not to the liking of the more conservative section of the community. One Hindu School was started at Entally and another, the Mahakali Pathshala, opened on the Upper Circular Road, Calcutta, by Mataji Tapaswini, a philanthropic lady of the Deccan in 1893. In the latter the current method of instruction was discarded. Besides the three R's, girls were given instruction in the Hindu shastras and Hindu rituals. Sister Nivedita (formerly, Miss Margaret E. Noble) of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda founded another girls' school at Bag-bazar, Calcutta, in 1898 where the simple ideals of Hinduism were taught in all its aspects, over and above the conventional three R's.

The Bethune College, however, made rapid progress in the following decade. The number of students increased both in the college and in the collegiate school. Success at the University examinations, from Entrance to B.A., was beyond expectation. Successful candidates held scholarships of the junior and senior grade and gold and silver medals. At least ten graduates were the recipients of the Padmavati medal since its start in 1890. Prize distribution ceremonies used to take place with great eclat. Persons of high rank

visited the institution and left on record their appreciation of its teaching. Meetings and conferences of women as well as exhibition of female handicrafts were held now and then. In a word the Bethune College turned into a venue for the various activities of women.

The college had 28 girls on its rolls on the 31st March, 1898, as against 23 in the previous session. Two candidates passed the B.A. and four the F.A. examination. The prize distribution ceremony was held as usual in February under the presidency of Lady Elgin. Her Highness the Nawab Begum of Murshidabad, Ferdous Mahal, C.I., was pleased to award a gold medal to the girl who headed the list of successful candidates from the collegiate school in the Entrance examination of 1897. The medal was presented at the distribution of prizes, above referred to. On this day also Sir Francis Maclean, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court and President of the College Committee, unveiled the portrait of Monomohun Ghose, late Secretary to the Bethune College. The school did not fare so well as in the previous year. Seven candidates were sent up, and three only came out successful. There were 145 pupils on its rolls, an increase of seven over 1896-97. The number of boarders fell off from 29 to 25.

The year 1898-99 witnessed the establishment of the "Monomohun Ghose Memorial Library." This library consisted of a number of books presented to the school by Mrs. Beveridge, Miss Manning and other friends of Mr. Monomohun Ghose in England. At their request the books were kept in a separate case. The annual prize distribution was held as before. The Nawab Begum of Murshidabad offered a gold medal this time to the girl who headed the list of the successful candidates from the college at the F. A. examination of 1898. In this session the number of students increased to 30. Two candidates came out successful in the B.A. examination, Miss Snehalata Mazumdar, daughter of the famous Homeopathic doctor Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, having passed with second class Honours in Mathematics and Samuel Isabela with second class Honours in English. Ten candidates appeared at the F.A. examination, of whom six passed. The collegiate school had 155 pupils, against 145 in the preceding year, of whom as many as 79 were Hindus. The results were brilliant. Three girls were sent up for the Entrance examination and all passed, one in the first and two in the second division. The boarders this year numbered 24, of whom only 9 belonged to the college department.

The number of students of the Bethune College was gradually increasing. It came up to at 35 on the 31st March, 1900. Of the

students, 16 were Brahmos, 15 Native Christians, 1 Hindu, 1 European, 1 West Indian and one Jewess. The results of the University examinations were also satisfactory, so far as this institution was concerned. One lady passed her B.A. with second class Honours in English. It should be noted that Lilian Palit who appeared at the B.A. examination in 1900 as a private candidate, securing first class Honours in French, was the first woman candidate eligible for Eshan Scholarship to the value of Rs. 50 a month. But due to her failure to fulfil certain conditions she did not get it. Ten ladies passed their F.A., the largest number from a single women's college, this year. Of them seven were placed in the second division and three in the third. The school department also did well in the final examination. This year, too, three sat for the Entrance examination, and all of them passed, Miss Banalata De being placed in the first and the other two in the second division. Banalata was the recipient of a second grade junior scholarship of Rs. 15/- a month. But the numerical strength of the school fell to 138. The Hindu students, however, mustered strong in this department and the boarding house was filled to capacity, all the seats (thirty-two in all) being occupied. Of these thirteen belonged to the college and the rest to the school department.

The ceremony of the distribution of prizes was held as usual, this time under the presidency of the Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Woodburn. His Honour sanctioned a music teacher for the institution, thus supplying a long-felt want. Lady Woodburn who gave away the prizes, promised an annual prize of a silk *sari* to the most meritorious student of the college.

Bethune College continued its work of dissemination of knowledge with as much warmth and vigour as before. In the year 1900-01, three candidates graduated from this college, while in the F.A. examination five passed, four in the second and one in the third division. Miss Prabhabati Roy obtained the second grade senior scholarship. Seven girls passed the Entrance examination from the Bethune Collegiate School. From amongst them Radharani Majumdar was the recipient of a third grade junior scholarship.

Some important changes were effected in the establishment of the Bethune College in the following session. Miss Chandramukhi Bose, M.A., served the college since 1884, first as a lecturer and then as Lady Superintendent, later on called the 'Principal'. She could not continue her services due to illness of a serious chronic type. She retired in December, 1901, on a pension. The Committee of Management made some provisional arrangement in the following manner. Mrs. Kumudini Das, B.A. (formerly, Miss Khastagir)

would act as Principal and Miss Surabala Ghose, B.A., as Lady Superintendent. Mrs. Das was later confirmed in her post. Miss Ghose was appointed Head Mistress of the school.

We find an estimate of the progress of women's education in the Quinquennial Reports on the Progress of Education in Bengal. In the second of these Reports, from 1897-98 to 1901-02, the Bethune College was stated to be the most largely attended among the three women's colleges, the other two being the La Martiniere for girls and the Loreto House. The former had 36 pupils on its rolls in 1901-20, while in 1896-97 it had only 23. Of these 36 pupils 25 were in the F.A. and 11 in the B.A. class. Thirtyseven candidates passed the B.A. examination during this quinquennium, and all from the Bethune College. The number of high schools for girls rose from 12 to 13 altogether. The most important of these, according to the report, was the Bethune Collegiate School, from where seventeen pupils had passed in 1901-02. The number of pupils in the school stood at 137, of whom 128 were Hindus and only 9 Native Christians. At the Entrance examination two were presented but none passed.

The number of pupils in the Bethune College decreased to 24 in 1902-03, which was considered by the Educational Authorities as 'disappointing'. But they have not ascertained any reasons for this fall. Results of the University examination of those sent up from this institution were, however, satisfactory. Two candidates passed their B.A., one of whom Miss Kumudini Mitra, later Mrs. Kumudini Bose, made her mark in the field of journalism, literature and social and political work. Seven candidates succeeded in the First Arts examination, one being placed in the first and the rest in the second division. Surabala Mukherjee held a first grade senior scholarship of Rs. 20/- and Sukhalata Rai one second grade scholarship of Rs. 16/- a month. Four students passed their Entrance examination from the collegiate school, of whom Renu Bose was the recipient of a third grade junior scholarship of Rs. 8/- a month. It should be noted that the number of students in the recognised secondary female schools increased to 631, as against 548 in the preceding year. Of these the Bethune Collegiate School and the Eden Female School at Dacca were run by the Provincial Government. In the Bethune Collegiate School classes were opened during the session for the training of Indian mistresses. The Brahmo Balika Sikshalaya and several other missionary schools, too, started these classes with liberal grants from the provincial revenues.

The arts colleges for women were fortunate enough to enroll students in the session 1903-04, almost treble the number of the preceding year. The numerical strength of the Bethune College stood

at thirty. From the Bethune College five candidates passed their First Arts, two in the first and three in the second division. Of these successful candidates Hironmoyi Sen secured a first grade senior scholarship of Rs. 20/- and Anamonka one of Rs. 16/- per mensem. The latter also won the Duff Scholarship, awarded annually to the Christian candidate who obtains the highest number of marks in the F.A. examination. She was a Khasi girl. Four girls passed from the collegiate school.

This session is memorable in the annals of the Bethune College for various reasons. M.A. classes in English and Philosophy were opened in 1903. This was the first attempt to provide teaching up to this standard. A club was also formed this year among the students of the college and the pupils of the upper four of the collegiate school. The object of this club, called the Bethune College Union, was to promote the physical, intellectual and moral welfare of the students and to promote friendly associations between teachers and students and between the students themselves. Other functions of the college, such as the prize distribution, and the annual Bethune Memorial meeting, continued as in the previous years.

There were some changes in the Committee of Management. In December, 1903 Saradacharan Mitra, M.A., B.L., the renowned jurist and judge, Calcutta High Court, was appointed Secretary to the Committee in place of J. Ghosal. Two other members, Rev. Kalicharan Banerjee and Dr. Nilratan Sircar, were added to the Committee.

In the following two sessions, 1904-05 and 1905-06, the number of students in arts colleges were on the decrease. But results of the Bethune College students in the University examinations were satisfactory. In 1904-05, four students passed in the F.A., one being placed in the first and three in the second division. The two senior scholarships, one first grade and one second grade, set apart for female candidates, were both gained by the students of the Bethune College. Nirbharpriya Ghose and Shobhanbala Rakshit were the respective scholarship-holders. The collegiate school did not fare well in the Entrance examination this year, only one candidate passed and that in the third division. In 1905-06 the examination results of the Bethune College were strikingly good. Out of four candidates sent up for the B.A. examination, two passed, and out of seven candidates for the F.A., six came out successful. Amongst the latter were two recipients of senior grade scholarships, Miss Jyotirmoyee Ganguli winning one of Rs. 20/- a month and Miss Rama Bhattacharyya one of Rs. 16/- a month. A word should be said of Jyotirmoyee Ganguli here. She became in after-life a fighter for India's political freedom, and

died from a tragic car accident while out to succour the students' cause. Two girls passed the Entrance examination from the Bethune Collegiate School. One of them Bibhabati Roy secured a junior scholarship.

The University Commission initiated by Lord Curzon laid down some general principles for the guidance of the colleges, the Bethune College not excepted. In 1906-07 the new regulations of the Calcutta University made special provisions for female candidates. We have already seen that the number of students in women's colleges were rapidly falling. To counteract this downward tendency it was ordered that the female candidates might be admitted to the intermediate examination in arts or science and to the B.A. examination without studying in an affiliated college. It was also ruled that they would not be eligible to sit for either the former or the latter examination until two years have elapsed from the Matriculation and Intermediate examinations respectively. Some minor rules were made for the guidance of the prospective examinees.

The Bethune College had, during 1906-07, twenty three students on its roll. The average number of students on the roll of the college on the 31st March during the quinquennium was 24. Four students were sent for the F.A. examination of 1907. They all passed, one in the first division and three in the second. For the B.A. examination of 1907, six candidates were sent up of whom two passed. I have already referred to the opening of the M.A. classes in English and Philosophy in 1903. There was one student in each class, but neither appeared at the M.A. examination. From the collegiate school eleven girls appeared at the Entrance examination, and nine passed—a very satisfactory result. One was placed in the first division, three in the second and the rest in the third.

In the quinquennium, 1902-03 to 1906-07, the staff of the Bethune College consisted of a Lady Principal, three professors and three lecturers. One of the latter was a woman; all the other professors and lecturers were men. About the Bethune College Union already mentioned, the Lady Principal reported to the following effect:

“This club has been much appreciated by the students and that it has been of immense benefit to them to bring them into closer contact with their teachers and affording them facilities for interchanging their thoughts and ideas among themselves. Debates are held in which the girls take part freely, many of them acquitting themselves creditably as speakers. An annual grant of Rs. 200/- is provided for the purchase of newspapers and periodicals for the students. The intention is to form a students' common room, but

owing to lack of accommodation it has not been possible to make a room available for the purpose."

It might sound strange, but nevertheless it was a fact, that the classes of the college were all carried on in one large hall of the school building. It was a great handicap. The Commission appointed by the Senate of the Calcutta University to inspect the colleges in Calcutta, after inspection of the Bethune College, remarked that 'the almost inevitable bafflement of the effort of concentrated attention, when five or six lectures are going on under one roof and within four walls simultaneously, must go far to defeat the ends for which the Bethune College was founded.' The teaching staff, in spite of their best efforts, could not help matters. Moreover, there was no room in which the students could meet except in the library which during college hours was used as the professors' room. Land had already been acquired and plans and estimates placed before the Government for the construction of new buildings, but by the end of the session no tangible results were achieved. It should be mentioned here that Syamacharan Gupta, Head Master of the Bethune Collegiate School (1904-9) laboured hard for the acquisition of the above piece of land.

The annual functions of the college continued as before. In 1906, the Bethune memorial meeting was presided over by Umesh Chandra Dutt, the famous editor of *Bamabodhini Patrika* and an earnest worker in the cause of women's all-round upliftment. He was also a member of the Committee of Management for a good number of years. One memorable event should be specially referred to here. The Indian National Congress held its annual session in Calcutta in December, 1906. In this connection a huge ladies' meeting was held in the Bethune College under the presidency of the Maharani of Baroda. Problems concerning women's condition in society were discussed in the meeting.

IV. THE SCHOOL & COLLEGE UNDER NEW REGULATIONS (1908-1917)

Like all other colleges, the Bethune College, too, was placed under the New Regulations of the University. Up to 1908 the college was managed by a Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal. This committee was dissolved in November, 1908 and replaced by a Governing Body for the college and a Managing Committee for the collegiate school in accordance with the University Regulations. The Director of Public Instruction, the Vice-Chancellor and the University Inspector of colleges were included

in the Governing Body, and the Inspectress of schools of the Bengali-speaking area was to be one of the members of the Managing Committee.

Both the college and the collegiate school started their new career with promise. The former had thirty-five students on its roll, a number larger than that in any previous year. One hundred and ninety-nine pupils were studying in the collegiate school. The results in the University examinations of 1908 were very satisfactory, and showed in each case an improvement on those of the preceding year. Eight students appeared at the Matriculation examination and all of them came out successful. Eight out of ten passed the F.A. and four out of eight passed the B.A. No other institution sent up female candidates for the F.A. and B.A. examinations.

Both the college and the collegiate school suffered badly for want of accommodation. No steps had hitherto been taken to remedy this defect by the erection of new buildings. The matter was further complicated by a proposal of the Government to open training classes for women teachers in these premises. This desire was actuated by the fact that Sarala Bala Mitra, a Hindu widow and a lecturer of the Bethune College, who had gone to England to have a course in teaching in October, 1907 at Government expense, returned in September, 1908. The Government wanted to open training classes in the Bethune College, with Sarala Bala Mitra in charge of this department. But this was not possible. Besides the want of accommodation in the college, the hostel also lacked proper accommodation and many applications had to be refused every year.

Though the college as well as the school fared well in the first year of the new management, this progress was not sustained the year following. The number of students of the college fell to thirty-one, and that of the collegiate school to one hundred and sixty-three. The decrease in the school was primarily due to the limitation of numbers under University Regulations to thirty in each class. A number of applications had to be refused for want of accommodation.

The results of the college and the school in the University examinations of 1909 were not satisfactory. At the Entrance examination, out of eight candidates, only one passed from the school. For the Intermediate examination two candidates were sent up by the college but one passed. Amongst the three candidates for the B.A., only one was successful. It has already been stated that the Philosophy classes in M.A. were opened in the Bethune College. Hridayabala Bose passed the M.A. examination in this subject in 1909 but as a non-collegiate student.

Better provision was made for the teaching of Botany, the only science subject taught at the Bethune College. It is stated that 'the wants of the college have so far, since University reform came in, been unduly overlooked.' The decrease in the number of students in the second year after the introduction of the New Regulations was not a little due to this reason. The Bethune College, the only arts college for women in Bengal, says the *Report* of the D.P.I., 'is entitled to equal consideration with any other Arts College.' The Lady Principal in asking for this consideration writes:

"At present both the College and the School are much pressed for space. The classes of the college are all held in one hall The arrangement of the school classes is equally defective. So it is earnestly to be hoped that the proposed buildings should be erected without any delay."

This state of things had been well known since the first University inspection of colleges in September, 1905. It remained unremedied. Still it was hoped that the newly constituted Governing Body would see that the interests of the college were not neglected.

The annual functions of the college were continued with as much zeal as before. This year the Bethune Memorial meeting was held under the presidency of Swarna Kumari Devi, the well-known litterateur and elder sister of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. It was revealed in a speech at this meeting that Bethune, by virtue of his position as Legal member to the Governor-General's Council, offered posts of Deputy Magistrates and Munsiffs to some of our countrymen as an inducement to them to send their female wards to his school.

The next session (1909-10) saw the college redeeming its previous position. The student strength again rose to thirty-five. The results of the University examinations were also satisfactory. Five girls attended the B.A. examination and all passed. They included Jyotirmoyee Datta, later Mrs. Mukherjee, Principal, Bengal Academy, Rangoon, and Marie Bonnerjee, later on Professor of History, Bethune College. At the Intermediate Examination in Arts eight passed out of thirteen. Of the successful candidates in the I.A., Pritilata Ghosal obtained a scholarship of Rs. 25/- and Nirmala Bala Roy of Rs. 20/- per month, standing first and second among the successful female candidates.

In the school the number of pupils decreased to one hundred and forty-nine. Thus in two years the school had lost fifty girls, or just a quarter of the previous numerical strength. According to new regulations, the school was entitled to have only thirty girls in each of its classes. This was partly responsible for the decrease. In point of University examination the school compared unfavourably with

the college, as it could not present more than two candidates at the First Matriculation. Both of them, however, came out successful, Santa Chattopadhyaya, being the recipient of a scholarship of ten rupees. It should be stated that Santa Chattopadhyaya (later, Mrs. Kalidas Nag) is now a Bengali novelist of repute. She has written individually, as also in collaboration with her sister Sita Chattopadhyaya, also a student of the Bethune School and College.

In the following year (1911) two candidates passed the Matriculation examination from the school, and both were placed in the first division. One of them Susama Sinha Roy obtained a scholarship of Rs. 15/- a month. The college also did very well in the I.A. and the B.A. examination. Of the candidates who passed the I.A., four were placed in the first division and only one in the second. In the B.A. examination, all four candidates passed with distinction. There were thirty-nine students on the roll of the college, an increase of four over the last year. All the public functions of the college continued as usual, Kadambini Ganguli presiding over the Memorial meeting of Drinkwater Bethune.

The progress of the Bethune College and the Collegiate School was noticed in the *Fourth Quinquennial Review* (1907-8 to 1911-12). At the close of this period, that is in 1912, the staff of the college consisted of a Lady Principal, three professors and four lecturers. One of the lecturers was a lady, and the Head Mistress was also a lecturer in the college. The number of pupils in the college on the 31st March 1912, was forty. The average number of students in the quinquennium was thirty-six against twenty-four in the preceding one.

We find that the college is affiliated to the University in English, Vernacular Composition, Sanskrit, Bengali, History, Logic and Botany for the Intermediate and in English, Philosophy, History, Sanskrit and Vernacular Composition for the B.A. (Pass). The college secured no affiliation in Mathematics in the I.A. or in Political Economy and Political Philosophy for the B.A., though regular classes were held for the teaching of these subjects. Students were, however, allowed to take up these subjects with the special permission of the Syndicate.

Much stress was laid on the growth of corporate life of the students in this quinquennium. Students of the college and the school ran the College Union with the help of the instructing staff. The latter co-operated with them in all their social functions. The Common Room received the annual grant of Rs. 200/-. Ground was acquired to the west of the college for a play-ground. The college was hard-pressed for space, lectures being still carried on in a large hall.

It was proposed to erect a separate building for the college apart from the school and land had been acquired for the purpose. Of the 47 candidates sent up in the quinquennium for the I.A., 31 passed, and of these 9 were placed in the first division. Of 28 candidates who were sent up for the B.A., 16 candidates (or 58 per cent) were successful.

Both the school and the college made their mark in the University examinations of 1912. The school sent three candidates for the Matriculation examination of whom all passed. Nine candidates were sent up for the I.A. examination and all passed, three being placed in the first and six in the second division. Eight candidates were sent up for the B.A. of whom three succeeded. It should be specially noted that this year two women candidates appeared for the first time in the I.Sc. examination from the City College, and both of them passed.

Of the successful candidates of the Bethune School, a few felicitating words should be spoken of Sita Chattopadhyaya (later, Mrs. Sudhir Kumar Chaudhuri), who became a well-known writer in Bengali. She passed her Matriculation this year from the Bethune School, and was placed in the first division. The most prominent candidate of the session, however, was Tatini Gupta (later, Mrs. Saroj Kumar Das), who stood first on the general list from West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. She was the recipient of Mrs. Inglis Prize for securing the highest marks in English as well as the Kirtichandra-Mackenzie Prize for highest marks in Mathematics. She also received the Keshub Sen Prize of the year. She is now a prominent educationist in Bengal and is the Principal of the Bethune College. Sujata Basu, M.Ed. (Leeds), (later, Mrs. Satyendra Nath Roy), the third successful candidate, has also made her mark as an educationist in Bengal. It should be noted here that these three students were instrumental, after their admission into the college as first year students, in starting *Usha*, the predecessor of *The Bethune College Magazine*. *Usha* appeared then as a hand-written magazine.

Of the successful I.A. candidates of the Bethune College, Bibhabati Mitra and Santa Chattopadhyaya secured the two senior scholarships of Rs. 25 and Rs. 20 respectively. Of the three women candidates, who appeared for the B.A., Nirmalabala Roy of the Bethune College received the Padmavati Medal as well as the Prasannamoyi Devi Prize, started in 1912, for obtaining the highest marks in Sanskrit. Pritilata Ghosal, another B.A. from this college, obtained the Gangamani Devi Gold medal, instituted in memory of the wife of Ramtanu Lahiri, as she was considered the best candidate of the year in Mental and Moral Philosophy.

*DISTINGUISHED EX-STUDENTS OF THE BETHUNE SCHOOL
AND COLLEGE*



KADAMBINI GANGULY (Graduated, 1883)
Pioneer Social and Political Worker



KAMINI ROY (Graduated, 1886)
Famous Poetess and Pioneer Educationist



LADY ABALA BOSE
Distinguished Educational and Social Worker



SARALA DEBI CHOWDHURANI
Journalist, Writer and Political Leader

PAST PRINCIPALS OF THE BETHUNE COLLEGE



CHANDRAMUKHI BOSE
(1886—1901)



KUMUDINI DAS
(1902—1913)



G. M. WRIGHT
(1918—1928)



RAJKUMARI DAS
(1928—1933)

Mrs. Kumudini Das served the college for more than two decades, first as a Mistress, then as a lecturer and lastly as the Principal from 1901 up to 1913, or rather technically speaking, 1912, because we find in 1913 Miss Surabala Ghose holding the post of officiating Lady Principal. Mrs. Das retired in 1913. Miss Ghose officiated as Principal for two years. She was appointed in the substantive post of the Principal of the college and continued to serve as such for another two years, 1915 and 1916. In the latter year a post in the Indian Educational Service was created for the Principal of the Bethune College. In November, 1916 Miss A. L. Janau, B.Sc. (Hons., London), took up the post and continued till 1918.

In the University examination of 1913 both the school and the college retained their reputation as the premier women's educational institution in Calcutta. Three girls passed the Matriculation examination, and all were placed in the first division. Seven candidates passed their I.A. Three of them were placed in the first division, three in the second and only one in the third. Amongst the B.A. candidates, seven in number, five came out successful. During the year there were 58 students on the rolls of the college.

In the following year (1913-14) the number of students rose to 65. This number is classified as follows: 56 Brahmos, 3 Hindus, and 6 Christians. The number of Hindu students gradually rose. More girls were sent up for University examinations than previously. Eight students passed the Matriculation. Of these, seven secured the first division marks, and one only was placed in the third division. Four passed their I.A. and all were placed in the first division. Of these, Tatini Gupta stood first on the general list of male and female candidates of the University. She was the recipient of Sindbala Medal for 1914. The Woomesh Chandra Mukerjee Silver Medal of the year was also awarded her for obtaining highest marks in the I. A. examination. Four candidates again passed their B.A., Santa Chattopadhyaya passed with distinction. The latter was also the recipient of the Padmavati Gold Medal of 1914. In this connection we might state that in 1949 the Bhuvan Mohini Gold Medal was awarded by the Calcutta University to Shanta Chattopadhyaya (Mrs. Nag) for writing the biography of her father Ramananda Chatterjee (भारतमुक्तिसाधक रामानन्द ओ अर्द्धशताब्दीर बीजा) considered to be the best prose work written by women for the previous three years. Of the candidates who passed the Matriculation Sudhalata Dowara, Tarulata Das Gupta and Sukhalata Dowara received respectively the twenty, fifteen and ten-rupee scholarships.

Even in 1914-15 the college suffered from want of sufficient

accommodation. The number of students were, however, on the increase, this year there being 72 students, the highest ever admitted. Both the school and the college maintained their standards so far as the University examinations were concerned. Of the girls who sat for the Matriculation examination, six came out successful, four being placed in the first and two in the second division. Bimala Nandi and Madhabika Bandyopadhyaya were the recipients of fifteen-rupee scholarships each. Ten candidates passed their I.A. Of these six were placed in the first and four in the second division. Sushila Roy and Sudhamoyee Datta secured a scholarship of Rs. 20/- each from West Bengal whilst Jyotsnamoyi Sen and Swarna Prabha Dasgupta (now, Mrs. Priya Ranjan Sen) received each Rs. 25 as scholarships from East Bengal circle. Of the three successful candidates in the B.A., Chandramukhi Sarangi obtained second class Honours in English literature. She was the first amongst the Bethune College students to get English Honours after the inception of the New Regulations. The college was entitled to send up candidates for Honours subjects with the permission of the Syndicate.

The Simla Bazar was acquired and added to the college grounds in 1915-16, but it was not found possible to provide funds for the construction of new buildings. The number of students, this year rising to 77, were steadily increasing. The results of the University examinations were also satisfactory. Six girls appeared at the B.A. examination and thirteen at the I.A. of whom five and ten, respectively, passed. As the college was not affiliated in any Honours subject, Tatini Gupta, Sita Chattopadhyaya and Sujata Basu had to appear as non-collegiate students and sit for the Honours examinations. Tatini Gupta secured first class Honours in Sanskrit and Sita and Sujata second class Honours in English. Their success at the examination paved the way for affiliation in Honours in the above subjects for the Bethune College. The college was also affiliated in Mathematics up to the Intermediate standard during the year. The Bethune Vidyalaya was not yet affiliated for the Intermediate in Science. I have already referred to the two girls passing their I.Sc. from the City College. This session Suriti Mitra (Mrs. H. M. Bose) passed the B.Sc. examination of the Calcutta University with distinction. She has thus won the unique honour of being the first B.Sc. amongst women.

In the *Fifth Quinquennial Review* (1912-13 to 1916-17) an estimate is made of the progress of the Bethune Vidyalaya as well as the changes it had undergone. I have already referred to the change in the personnel of the Principal. The Governing Body of

the college was also enlarged at the end of this period. The staff consisted of the Principal, three professors (men) and four lecturers (three men and one woman). Some lectures were delivered to the college students by two members of the Bethune Collegiate School staff, one of whom was a woman. In a Women's College men still predominated in the instructing staff. This elicited following comments from the Principal Miss A. L. Janau:

"Apart from the question of affiliation, which is discussed later, it is obvious that in a college for women there should be more than one woman on the staff. No college in England would have such a preponderance of men on its staff and here in India the conditions even more clearly indicate the necessity of women on the staff, if there is to be any of that intercourse between staff and students which is an essential feature of college life and which nothing else can replace. It is to be hoped that shortly the proportion of women lecturers and professors will be increased. In my opinion the ideal would be to have an equal number of men and women on the staff, and to have, as far as possible, one man and one woman for each subject in order that the students might benefit from the wider angle of vision thus obtained.

"In the new college, which it is hoped will be of a residential type, all the women professors and lecturers shall be resident."

The views of the Principal betrays her lack of knowledge of the Indian home. Though the teachers were mostly male, the gulf in the way of the relationship between the teachers and the taught was not so unbridgeable as it appeared to her. The question raised by Miss Janau was also not new. It had been raised even in the eighties of the nineteenth century when a section of our countrymen refused to send their girls to the Bethune Vidyalaya on the plea of the school having male teachers on its staff. Sir Richard Garth, then President of the College Committee and Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, countered this view and said that any institution for girls worth the name in England had men teachers on its staff and the latter discharged their duties loyally and faithfully without any detriment to the cause of women's education. Things, however, changed during the forty years following, even in Europe, and Miss Janau advanced the above plea quoting the model of the Western institutions. About the discipline and tone of the college her view, however, bears some amount of truth. She writes:

"The discipline of the college is perfectly satisfactory, but the lack of a residential element, the lack of women in the staff, the lack of any opportunity for the students to mix with mature educated women, results naturally in the absence of every thing which one

usually connects at home with the intellectual life of a women's college. Corporate life is almost absent, the students attend lectures and return to their homes. Their departure at the end of the college hours being determined by the necessity of going by one of the college buses, it is almost impossible for the day students (who form 78 per cent of the whole number) to have any of their leisure together."

There were by 1916-17 three colleges in Calcutta, *viz.*, the Bethune College, the Diocesan College and the Collegiate department of the Loreto House. The first two were affiliated to the degree and the third to the Intermediate standard. But the contributions of the Bethune College bear no comparison with either of the other two. There were 78 students on the rolls of the college on 31st March 1917 as against 40 on 31st March 1912. The highest number of students on the rolls of the college during the year 1916-17 was 83. During the quinquennium, Mathematics was only added to subjects of study in the I.A. But in course of the year 1917 affiliations were extended in English (Pass and Honours), Sanskrit (Pass and Honours) and Economics (Pass).

The college kept up its reputation during the quinquennium so far as the results of the University examinations were concerned. During this period sixty-one students were presented at the Intermediate examination in Arts. Of these 46 passed, 24 were placed in the first division. Thirty-five candidates appeared at the B.A. examination of whom 25 succeeded. The number of students increased, but the accommodation was totally inadequate, and no improvement in this respect was in sight. The hostel was also filled to its utmost capacity, and many applications for new entrants had to be refused. We shall, therefore, quote here from the *Quinquennial Report* its considered views about the claims of the Bethune College:

"The Bethune College is the oldest Government institution for the education of girls in India. Its establishment inaugurated a new epoch in the development of Hindu civilization, for it was in effect a public acknowledgement of ideas, then unpalatable to all save the few but pregnant with issues fateful for the future of India. The college has been neglected and mismanaged, but those who are immediately responsible for it are now at least perfectly clear as to what they need. They know that if Government provide them with reasonable accommodation and an effective staff, they will turn out in ever-increasing numbers women who will play a prominent part in the education and development of Bengal. I know the difficulties of the Government, but the claims of the Bethune College are unique.

The foundation day of the institution is the 7th May, 1849. On that day its founder said:

“ ‘We have succeeded and the banner which we plant this day with the blessing of God, shall never go backward, until its supremacy is felt and thankfully acknowledged in every part of the land’.”

To plant the banner, Bethune had a warm and enthusiastic collaborator in Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee. Bethune had wished that his (Dakshinaranjan's) name were associated with the institution in a permanent manner. The authorities of the Bethune Vidyalaya gave a practical shape to this desire of Bethune at the end of this quinquennium. On 11th April, 1916 the following tablet was inscribed on the front wall of the then College Hall in the presence of a distinguished gathering:

“This tablet is erected by the Government of Bengal in honourable memory of the late Raja Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee who worked zealously and unselfishly for the cause of education of the girls and women of Bengal and who rendered valuable assistance to the Hon'ble Mr. John Drinkwater Bethune in the foundation of the Bethune College.”

The year 1917 passed through some troubles, as the question papers of Matriculation were twice out on the eve of the examination. In spite of these unforeseen troubles the collegiate school fared well and of the candidates sent up, five passed, all in the first division. Three of the successful candidates Subodhbala Roy, Sudha Chattopadhyaya and Manika Chattopadhyaya held scholarships, the first two of the value of Rupees fifteen and the third of Rupees ten only. With the teaching of Honours in different subjects the college embarked, no doubt, on a new career.

The following revised scale of fees was introduced with effect from June 1917.

School tuition Fee Rs. 2/- a month

College tuition Fee Rs. 3/- a month

Conveyance fee for college and school Rs. 2/- a month. All fees were payable for 12 months in the year.

V. YEARS OF EXPANSION (1918-27)

The year 1918 dawned with new hope and promise for India as well as for India's womenfolk. In the preceding December the annual session of the Indian National Congress had been held under the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant, the doughty champion of our

struggle for freedom. Born a British citizen, she adopted India as her motherland and her contributions might be envied even by Indians themselves. It was for the first time that Miss Jyotirmoyee Ganguli, a student of the Bethune College, organised a women's volunteer corps to look after the comforts of the women delegates and visitors. In September previous to this, Mr. Montague, then Secretary of State for India, declared in the British Parliament that some measure of *Responsible* Government, as distinguished from *Self-Government*, would be introduced in India just after the conclusion of the War. It might be recalled that the First World War was then raging furiously in the lands and waters of the Eastern Hemisphere. That Indian women would take not a little share in the fulfilment of our hopes and aspirations for Indian independence was evident from the action of our sisters even at this early date.

By 1918 we find that the Bethune College had risen high in the estimation of Indians. But it had not received the consideration which was its due from the Government. The earnest appeals of the respective Principals for the provision of a more commodious building found but little response from them. Only the stables were removed, and in their place an airy and convenient block of laboratory rooms was erected. The steady increase in the number of students put a growing pressure on the accommodation available. The college had 81 students on the 31st March, 1918, as against 78 in the preceding year. The Honours classes had already been started. Results of the University examinations were satisfactory. In 1918 five girls appeared at the B.A. examination and 16 at the I.A. Of these 2 and 12 respectively passed. From amongst the latter, five held women's special scholarships valued at Rs. 20/- each. Amongst the five successful matriculates of the year, one, Nirmala Basu, was the recipient of a special scholarship of Rs. 15/- per mensem. The college took the initiative in starting two fresh activities in 1918-19. A company of girl guides was established after a course of lectures on first aid delivered to the women members of the staff by Lady Stewart, and still more noteworthy, the Bethune College Magazine was revived, six years after the starting of *Usha* in 1918, retaining the same name. Professor Kumud Bandhab Chatterjee was its editor, and Miss Bêla Ghose—student-editor. In her foreword to the journal, Principal Miss A. L. Janau wrote:

“It gives me great pleasure to help in introducing *Usha* to the world, for introduction to a large sphere is all that she needs. Since 1912, she has been in existence, but has lived a strictly purdah-life, never going beyond the precincts of the College. Now she is exchanging her manuscript dress for one of print and is entering on a

career of usefulness. On this mission I wish her God-speed and hope that she will be the means of drawing into ever closer and closer bonds of good fellowship, the students who have passed out of the college and those within it."

Students on the college rolls on 31st March, 1919, stood at 85. After long years of earnest endeavour the Government at last sanctioned a scheme for the construction of temporary class rooms. These were being used in the session 1919-20. It was for the first time in 1919 under the New Regulations that Honours candidates appeared as regular students from the college. Ashabati Sarkar passed her Honours in English and was placed in the second class. The Principal remarked in the report of 1918-19 that "for want of affiliation in Mathematics and Botany up to the B.A. standard and in History up to the Honours standard the college is losing some of the best students." In the Matriculation examination of 1919, the school passed four girls, of whom Pritilata Bhattacharyya and Himani Sarkar held each a special scholarship of ten rupees only.

The year 1919 passed through extreme troubles and turmoils. The Satyagraha movement started by Mahatma Gandhi to combat the lawless law, the Rowlatt Act, gave rise to an upsurge of national sentiments. The powers-that-be left no stone unturned to counteract this movement, but the result was mere aggravation. The Jalianwalabag Massacre perpetrated early this year, is a permanent blot on British rule in India. This uncalled-for massacre together with other complications outside India led to the launching of the Non-Co-Operation Movement in 1920. This troublous state of things could not but have a repercussion on educational institutions. The wave of national sentiment reached the Bethune College. Miss G. M. Wright, an honours graduate in Modern History from Oxford, had become the Principal late in 1918. She was a strict disciplinarian; so much so that her sense of discipline at times prevailed over her knowledge of history. The call to join the national struggle had its effect on the Bethune College students but due to the strict disciplinary action taken by Miss G. M. Wright the girls returned sooner to their studies than would otherwise have been possible. The students of the college were increasing every year and on the 31st March 1920 there were 89 students on the rolls. We have it from the *Report* of the D.P.I., Bengal, for 1919-20, that the question of further development and reorganisation had been held in abeyance pending the consideration of the report of the Calcutta University Commission. We also learn from the same source that there was a proposal to separate the college from the school and locate it in a separate part of the town. But this idea was abandoned.

The session of 1920-21, the most fateful year in our national history, had started. The great Non-Co-Operation Movement was in full swing. The whole of India—from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin—was moved; the student community, the future builders of the nation not excepted. Our sisters were equally conscious of the political bondage of our motherland. They came out of their seclusion in large numbers and stood shoulder to shoulder with their brothers in the national struggle. The Bethune College, the premier women's institution, could not remain unaffected.

The Bethune College and the Collegiate School occupied the same building till September, 1920. In the following month the school was removed to temporary sheds, especially erected for housing the school section, to the north-west of the main building. This was then considered a great relief as the number of college students rose to 111 on the 31st March, 1921. The inadequacy of accommodation was again removed to some extent by the addition of a small building for science classes and the botanical laboratory. We also note that the college authorities this year made arrangements for extra-curricular activities for the students. They took the girls to various places of interest, including the Botanical Gardens, the Exhibition of Indian Arts, and the Commercial Museum. But the bus-arrangements were not satisfactory. Long hours spent in coming to and going from school in the college bus hampered the studies and impaired the health of the students. Miss Wright remarked:

“The working day of the non-boarders is cruelly prolonged by the long drive to and fro which they are obliged to take, and the impossibility of strict punctuality seriously impairs the value of the first lecture.”

The results of the University examinations of 1920 were excellent. Six girls passed the Matriculation from the Bethune School and all were placed in the first division. Amongst the successful candidates in the I.A. examination six special scholarships for women worth Rs. 20/- were held by the students of the Bethune College, a unique honour for any institution. Eight students passed their B.A. in 1920. Of them two succeeded in having Honours in English.

The *Sixth Quinquennial Review of Progress of Education in Bengal* (1917-18 to 1921-22) lays special stress on the progress made by the Bethune School and College. The increase in number of students reflected the increased usefulness of the institution. “This has been achieved” says the *Review*, “in the face of constant difficulty due largely to lack of accommodation.” While quoting the Principal it says: “The buses are crammed; the hostel is crammed; the lecture rooms are crammed. She outlines a scheme for extension

both of hostel and lecture-room accommodation, and justifies her appeal for increased funds by the fact that every year she is found to reject many applications for admission both to the college and the hostel. The increased demand for scientific education, noted among men students, is also being made by women, and the Principal bases upon this her claim that the college be affiliated in Chemistry and Physics to the Intermediate standard, a claim which at the end of the period was not far from acceptance."

In 1918 a Committee had been appointed to consider the whole question of the future of the institution. The Government considered the recommendations of the Committee and accepted certain principles upon which possible advance should be made, *e.g.*, (i) that the school staff should be, as far as possible, composed of women, (ii) that certain extension of premises should be made, though so far only a small building for science teaching had been added, and (iii) that revised curriculum should be introduced. The settlement of its details in their opinion had to await the constitution of the Board of a standing committee for female education to be formed in accordance with the recommendations of the Calcutta University Commission. But it took years for the authorities to give even partial effect to these principles enunciated by themselves.

The affiliations received by the college up to 1921-22 were as follows: English, Vernacular Composition, Sanskrit, History, Logic, Botany and Mathematics in the Intermediate Arts standard; English, Philosophy, History, Sanskrit, Vernacular Composition, Economics and Mathematics in the B.A. Pass and English and Sanskrit in the B.A. Honours. Four teachers were added to the staff to teach the subjects newly affiliated. The corporate life of the college, during this period, mostly centered round games. A tennis lawn was laid out on the south side, and attempts were made to introduce both this game and croquet for which Mrs. A. N. Chaudhury presented a set of implements. Students, however, remained more faithful to badminton than to anything else. Lantern Talks by prominent educationists like W. Wordsworth, were organised in the college. Parties of students also attended with delight the lectures of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose and Rabindra Nath Tagore. The most important event of the year was the institution on 3rd September, 1921 of an Old Students' Guild by the Principal. The object of the Association was to rouse interest of the Old Students in the welfare of their *Alma Mater* as also to promote a sense of fellowship between the old and the new students.

Results of the college in 1921 beat the former records. Amongst the twenty-nine candidates sent up for the I.A. examination, twenty-

six came out successful, while out of twenty-one candidates for the B.A. Pass, as many as twenty passed. This year seven girls secured Honours, five in English and two in Sanskrit. It was for the first time that students sat for Sanskrit Honours under the new orders. Amongst those who secured Honours in English was Lila Nag, now known as Mrs. Lila Roy. She wielded her forceful pen in her capacity as editor, *Jayasri*, and did good work in Dacca both in the educational and political field. She has now come to the fore-front as a political leader of the progressive school of thought. In the Matriculation examination, all eleven girls sent up passed, eight being placed in the first, two in the second and only one in the third division. Miss Bani Chatterji stood second amongst girls of the year (1921), and won a scholarship of Rs. 15/- per month.*

The academic year, 1922-23, was a year of promise for the Bethune College and School. The number of students on the college rolls was 120, as against 114 in the preceding year. Like English and Sanskrit, Honours classes used to be held regularly in Mathematics. But for want of affiliation in the latter subject, candidates had to appear as non-collegiate students. In previous reports there was no mention of the Music classes. In this session a branch of the Sangit Sangha, started by Mrs. A. N. Chaudhury, was opened here and classes for instrumental as well as vocal music were regularly held every Saturday. There were also arrangements for physical exercises. Students used to play badminton and tennis. Results of the University examinations in 1922 were uniformly good. Of 28 candidates who appeared at the I.A. examination, 27 passed and only one failed. Amongst the successful candidates, as many as 18 were placed in the first division. Six of them secured the special scholarships of the value of Rs. 20/- a month each as in 1920. The college sent up 19 students for the B.A. examination of whom 17 came out successful. Amongst these four received Honours, two in English, one in Sanskrit and one in Mathematics. Mathematics Honours not being an affiliated subject, the candidate had to appear with the special permission of the Syndicate. This year two candidates received first class Honours, one in English and the other in Sanskrit. Miss Ushalata Biswas who received a second class Honours in English, is now a prominent educationist in Bengal. Her papers on Education smack of original and deep thinking and wide reading.

Studies in the college were widened in 1923-24. It secured affiliations up to the I.Sc. standard. A lecturer was appointed to

* The history of the Collegiate School from 1922 onwards is given in the Appendix.

teach the subject. A laboratory was also equipped for the purpose. Regular I.Sc. classes commenced. Mathematics and Philosophy were added to the Honours subjects. A new hostel for girls subsidised by Government was opened in the vicinity of the college under the auspices of the Brahmo Somaj. This year the college sent up 30 candidates for the I.A. examination, of whom 26 were successful. Out of 17 candidates who appeared for the B.A., 12 passed, two with English Honours.

In the following session, 1924-25, we find nothing new to record except the fact that the Bengal Social Service League arranged to deliver a course of lectures at the Bethune College on "Health in the Home" which was attended by the students in large numbers. It may be mentioned here that the health of the student community was in a bad state. This fact was revealed in the health examination conducted by the University. During the year the college maintained its standard of examinations uniformly well. Of the 26 B.A. and 30 I.A. candidates, 21 and 26 passed respectively. The successful B.A. candidates included as many as 6 Honours students, 4 in English, and one each in Sanskrit and Mathematics.

The reputation of the college as a premier institution for women on this side of India spread far and wide. The number of students increased every year, so much so that in 1925-26 it stood at 151. Results of the University examinations were in keeping with the reputation it had already won. In 1925 for the first time six students were sent up for the I.Sc. examination of whom five came out successful. Saralabala Ghose, one of the successful I.Sc. candidates, carried off the Nawab Abdul Latif and father Lafont Scholarship. Seventeen candidates appeared at the I.A. and twenty-five at the B.A. examination. Of these thirteen and twenty-one respectively passed. Amongst the successful B.A. candidates, four secured Honours, two in English and one each in Sanskrit and Philosophy. The two latter candidates received first class Honours. Miss Bani Chatterjee, the Philosophy candidate, not only secured a first class, but stood first amongst the successful Honours candidates in Philosophy. It might be noted that this was the first time a candidate appeared in Philosophy Honours from the college.

During the session, 1925-26, improvements were effected in some respects in the college. I have already referred to the opening of a hostel in the vicinity of the college. This year a new hostel for women was established in Circular Road by the Education Department. Thus the difficulties the college had to face through insufficient hostel accommodation were relieved to some extent. The old arrangement of horse buses for the conveyance of students to and

from the college were abolished and motor buses introduced. This improvement was greatly appreciated. During the year the college benefited by the hygiene lectures delivered under the auspices of the Bengal Social Service League. The school also secured the services of Miss Carswell, the Physical Instructress from the Young Women's Christian Association, who gave valuable advice and instruction to the students so far as physical education was concerned.

The Bethune College was still the largest women's college in Bengal. The *Seventh Quinquennial Review* (1922-23 to 1926-27) gives us a resumé of the achievements of the institution. We have laid stress on these in the course of our narrative in this chapter. Some points should be specially emphasised. How the college progressed in point of its numerical strength is clear from the fact that it increased from 114 in 1922 to 135 in 1926. In the preceding year the number rose even to 151. The two hostels, recently opened, accommodated nearly fifty students.

The social aspect of the student-life in the college found expression in various activities in which both the staff and the students joined. The Debating Society, the Bethune College Magazine, the Old Students' Guild were activated in the session 1926-27. Some of these deserve more than a passing notice. *Usha* was virtually the College Magazine since 1918. But it was not continued for long. When *Usha* was revived in 1926 under the name of *The Bethune College Magazine*, the sponsors of the latter appeared to have forgotten its past history altogether. The *Magazine* had the following Sanskrit motto in Bengali characters: विद्या विधत्ते स्वसुतं प्रकर्षम्, that is, "Learning tends to the improvement of children of a country". The *Magazine* saw the light of day under the editorship of Prof. Miss Stella Bose, the student-editor being Miss Nihar Nalini Dutt. The Old Students' Guild used to help poor students and hold a successful re-union in September each year. I have already said that Principal Miss Wright was the sponsor of this Guild. Let me quote her own words from the *Quinquennial Report of the Bethune College and Collegiate School* for the years 1922-27.

"I am glad also to have been able to establish an Old Students' Guild which meets annually in September. The meeting is remarkable for the good fellowship shown between the various generations, for the admirable quality of the dramatic entertainment staged by the present students for the pleasure of the visitors, and for the useful work done in the general meeting. The Guild has founded a scholarship of Rs. 5/- per month for a poor student of the college."

Students of the college, wrote Miss Wright, were also sensitive to the needs of their struggling companions and founded an Aid

Society for their benefit and also for the relief of any sudden widespread distress. The students raised Rs. 600/- for the relief of the sufferers from the Midnapore flood in 1926.

During the quinquennium no improvement was effected as regards accommodation. The college, like the proverbial cuckoo, had completely ousted the Bethune School from its original habitation. It was housed in temporary tin-sheds since October, 1920. Let us hear Miss Wright on this item:

“Advance in regard to accommodation may still be described as subterranean. That is, plans and estimates for a great extension of premises have been drawn up, examined, and discussed with minute and elaborate care, but no money has yet been granted. When I came to the college nine years ago I was appointed to sit on a Committee which had as its object the immediate improvement and extension of the Bethune College. Except for a row of temporary corrugated iron roofed class rooms and the conversion of some disused stables into school rooms the premises are no larger now in 1927 than they were then in 1918, whilst the college students have increased from 78 to 135 and the school pupils from 225 to 318.”

The interest in Physical culture steadily increased and about twenty students joined a voluntary drill class in 1926-27. At one time there were only a few Hindu students in the college. During this session Hindu students outnumbered those of any other community.

Something should be said here about the results of the University examinations. This year, 1926, we have a detailed account of the number of candidates and passes in various examinations, from this college. Of the 24 I.A. candidates, as many as 20 passed 9 being placed in the first, 10 in the second and 3 in the third division. Six I.Sc. candidates were sent up, and 4 passed, 3 in the first and 1 in the third division. Twenty-two students appeared in the B.A. Pass and nine in the Honours examination. Twenty-one passed in the Pass course and seven secured Honours. Of the nine Honours students the two that could not secure Honours went into the Pass list. Seven of the successful B.A.'s obtained distinction. One student from this college stood first in B.A. Botany in the whole University.

The following session, 1927-28, too, the college maintained its progress. This year's University results left nothing to be desired. Of the 17 B.A. candidates, 17 passed. Four students received Honours in four subjects, one in each. In Sanskrit Honours Miss Abha Sen stood first in first class Honours, a rare distinction for the college. In Philosophy Honours Padmasana Sinha stood first

among the women candidates and secured the Gangamani Gold Medal. Twenty-nine students appeared in the I.A. and three in the I.Sc. examination. Of these, twenty and two respectively came out successful. In July 1927 the college secured affiliation in Physics up to the Intermediate standard.

A system of library supervision by members of the staff was introduced in this session, with a view to inducing and guiding private reading by students. The Old Girls' Guild, the *Bethune College Magazine*, and the Debating Society continued to flourish, and one of the hostels embarked on a course of lessons in folk dancing. Lectures on educative subjects were organised by the Bengal Women's Education League. Lectures on the League of Nations and on the stream of Indian History were delivered respectively by J. H. Lindsay, I.C.S., and Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. These lectures were largely attended by the students.

VI. STEERING THROUGH THE STORM (1928-35)

The Non-co-operation movement subsided, bearing no immediate fruits. But the cravings for self-rule or *Swaraj* which it generated in the hearts of the people, came to stay. Indians were not satisfied with the sort of responsible government they received at the hands of the Britishers, and demanded a real share in the affairs of the State. The British Parliament sent out a Royal Commission to India with Sir John Simon at its head. It was an all-white Commission, Indians being strictly left out. This was taken exception to by all the political parties in India. The Indian National Congress came forward to start a boycott movement against the Commission with the slogan "Simon go back". As a preliminary to this, an all-India *Hartal* was proclaimed on the 3rd February, 1928.

Miss G. M. Wright was still the Principal of the Bethune School and College, under whose strict discipline it expanded and prospered so much. But the wave of Nationalism swept away all the barriers reared up with such meticulous care. The students joined the *Hartal*. This was considered as breach of discipline, and Miss Wright did not hesitate to take severe steps. She closed the institution and the hostel *sine die*. The public mind was very much agitated against this measure. At a public meeting held at Albert Hall Miss Ila Sen (niece of Sree Makhanlal Sen) put forward the student's standpoint. The Governing Body of the College also could not agree with Miss Wright. It should be said to her credit that Miss Wright

preferred to relinquish the reins of office rather than give up her principles. She went on leave on 7th March, 1928, preparatory to retirement. During her leave period Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya, the famous philosopher-professor of the college, officiated for her as Principal. She retired on a proportionate pension in June, 1928. Mrs. Raj Kumari Das, Principal of the Eden High School for girls at Dacca, an ex-alumnus of the Bethune College, and younger sister of its first Indian Principal Miss Chandramukhi Bose, took her place.

The troubles that beset the institution, did not affect its usual satisfactory results in the University examinations. In 1928, 23 candidates appeared at the B.A. examination, and 19 passed. Three of these passes secured Honours, one each in English, Sanskrit and Philosophy. Of these latter again, Miss Surama Mitra secured a first class and stood first amongst the candidates in Sanskrit Honours. Of the 23 I.A. and 11 I.Sc. candidates, 18 and 10 respectively came out successful. The number of students increased to 170 on the 31st March, 1928.

Improvements in some other respects were effected during the session. Physical training was introduced under a well-qualified physical instructress in the person of Mrs. Doris Webber. A drill-shed was completed and brought into use after the close of the year. Classes in music both vocal and instrumental, were held regularly, under the auspices of the Sangit Sangha. The College Magazine, the Debating Society and the Old Girls' Guild continued. Annual social functions, such as the memorial meetings of Bethune and Vidya-sagar as well as the prize distribution, were held with due eclat. It may also be noted here that many students of the two college hostels enlisted themselves under Miss Lotika Ghose, now Professor of English in the College, as volunteers for the 1928 Congress in which Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose for the first time in the history of the Congress organised volunteers in military order. They were duly trained and took part in the route march from Howrah to the Congress Pandal in the Presidential procession.

To feed the women's colleges there must be more high schools. During the year 1928-29 some improvement was in sight in this respect. The Government gave their general approval to the policy that a school for girls on a grant-in-aid basis should be established at each district headquarters. High Schools were started accordingly as an experiment at Khulna and Howrah during this session.

The year 1929 seemingly passed well though preparations were going on for a hard political struggle in the next year. This, however, could not affect the college during the session, and its work

went on smoothly. The number of students on the 31st March, 1930 stood at 182. The examination results were excellent. Amongst the B.A. candidates, 25 in number, 21 succeeded. These passes included five Honours students, three in English and two in Sanskrit. Of the latter again, one, Miss Pritilata Gupta, secured a first class and stood third in order of merit. Twenty and ten students respectively passed from amongst the twenty-two I.A. and eleven I.Sc. candidates.

Miss Doris Webber did excellent work in organising Physical Training both in the college and the school. Drill was taken to with zeal by the girls. Classes in Music were carried on as before. Besides the usual social functions which reflected the lighter side of college life, some excursions and outings were undertaken in this session. Diamond Harbour, Barrackpore Government House, Victoria Memorial, Indian Museum and a Jute Factory at Serampore were visited. This year's prize distribution ceremony was presided over by Her Excellency Lady Jackson. Some special awards were presented, and it was proposed that these awards would be given, if funds permitted, for domestic science and fine arts subjects, such as cooking, needle work and music, both vocal and instrumental, thus showing that the feminine and softer side of women's education was not neglected. Another feature of this year's Prize Day was the special prizes awarded by the Principal and staff to students who had done remarkably well in the University examinations. Ava Sen, Surama Mitra, Basanti Das and Rama Datta were the recipients of these prizes. Another mentionable event of this year was a visit to the college of the Hon. Emily Kinnaird, who spoke to the students on International relationships and the interdependence of nations. Her speech was very much appreciated.

The civil disobedience movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in April, 1930, inspired Indians with a new hope of deliverance. This affected most of the educational institutions and the numerical strength of the Bethune College decreased considerably. The college came to the limelight during this movement owing to certain actions of the Principal. Once in April and again in July the students abstained from attending college on account of general strikes called *Hartal*. On the latter occasion the Principal rusticated all the students of the college, who were absent for this day. This action of hers led to a flutter in the Press. The public mind was greatly moved. The Governing Body of the college, however, intervened and decided that those who were willing to leave the college would be given transfers but those who wanted to remain, must apologise and give an undertaking for future good conduct. Taking advantage of this

decision many students left the college. The result was that from 182 students on the college rolls the number dwindled to 140 on the 31st March, 1931. *Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal for 1927-32* mentions this event as follows:

“It should be noted with regret that a wave of unrest spread amongst a section of the students of the Bethune College during the civil disobedience movement which rendered disciplinary measures necessary. A few students were compelled to leave the college and others that remained had to give an undertaking for their future good conduct.”

The national upheaval was also not a little responsible for the disparity between the candidates sent up and the passes at least in the Intermediate examination in 1930. Some students had either abstained from appearing at the examination, or could not pay adequate attention to their studies. Though there was comparatively some disparity between the candidates sent up and the passes, nevertheless the results were quite satisfactory. Amongst the 23 B.A. candidates, 18 passed, eight securing Honours—4 in English, 2 in Philosophy and one each in Sanskrit and Mathematics. This number in Honours was the highest since the Honours subjects were introduced. Of the 31 candidates for I.A. and 12 for I.Sc. 20 and 9 respectively passed.

Six free-studentships used to be awarded annually to deserving poor students by a reference to the Governing Body of the college. An account of the revised scale of fees and other charges is given below:

1. (a) An admission fee of Rs. 4
(b) A monthly tuition fee of Rs. 4
2. (a) An annual Common room fee of Re. 1
(b) An annual Examination fee of Re. 1
3. Students using the college buses for conveyance have to pay a bus fee of Rs. 4 a month, but there is a concession of Re. 1 when more than one student comes from the same house.

Social and annual functions of the college and the collegiate school were held as usual. Adequate attention was paid to the physical instruction of the girls both of the college and the collegiate school. Miss Webber, the Physical Instructress, having resigned in June 1930, her place was filled up by Miss Mary Rickets. Prizes were awarded as usual on the results of the annual examinations every year. A detailed account of some of the special prizes is given below:

(1) Mohitbala Prize—An annual prize in books to be awarded to the student who, standing first at the University examination

(Matriculation) from the Bethune Collegiate School, prosecutes her studies in the Bethune College for the Intermediate Examination. The value of the prize is Rs. 17. This is a Trust Fund Prize awarded by Babu Hemchandra Mitra of No. 12 Bechu Chatterji Street in memory of his deceased wife named Mohitbala.

(2) Gwalior Prize—An annual medal or money prize to be awarded to a student who stands first in the Matriculation examination from the Bethune Collegiate School.

The prize was offered by Her Highness the Maharani Sakhya Raja Saheba, C.I.E., Regent of Gwalior, on the occasion of her visit to Calcutta.

(3) Bethune Prize—An annual prize to be awarded in the first three years by turns to the successful students of the college who stand first in English in the B.A., I.A. and Matriculation examination. The value of the Prize is Rs. 66.

(4) Prof. Sen's English Prize—An annual prize in books to be awarded to a student of the Bethune College who stands first in English among those who graduate from the Bethune College.

(5) Santilata Basu Roy Gold Medal to be awarded to a student who stands first in Mathematics in the B.A. examination of the Calcutta University. The value of the medal is Rs. 34.

With the advent of 1931 things at the Bethune College had settled down somewhat. In spite of the disturbances of the previous year, the high standard of results at the University examinations was maintained. All the five candidates, sent up, secured Honours, two getting a first class in Sanskrit. Of these two Nanibala Datta Gupta stood first class second. Other results were also very satisfactory. Besides the 17 successful B.A.'s from amongst 20 sent up, 23 out of 24 girls passed their I.A. and 5 out of 5 their I.Sc. examination. In the B.A. Honours and in the I.Sc., there were cent per cent successes. There was also a small increase in the number of students which stood at 149 on 31st March, 1932.

Not only in 1931 but during the whole quinquennium the institution kept up its high efficiency so far as the results of the University examinations were concerned. The *Quinquennial Report of the Bethune College and the Attached Collegiate School for the years 1927-32* gives a summary of these achievements in the following words:

“The college maintained its standard of reputation in the high percentage of passes during the quinquennium except in one year. The results in Sanskrit have been uniformly good. The College topped the list of successful candidates in First Class Honours in Sanskrit at the B.A. examination in 1927 and 1928; our girls secured

the second place in the first class in 1929 and 1931 in Sanskrit.

“One of our students secured the Duff Scholarship for standing first in Chemistry in 1928 and also obtained the Sarada Prasad Scholarship and Janaki Prasad Scholarship for standing first in Botany. Our girls have carried off the Nawab Abdul Latif and Father Lafont Scholarship in science subjects for six years in succession from 1925 to 1930. In 1927, 1928 and 1930 our girls secured the Gangamani Gold Medal awarded to the best scholar in Moral Philosophy at the B.A. examination. In 1930 one of our girls secured the Bankim Chandra Gold Medal for original composition in Bengali at the I.A. examination and in 1931 another girl obtained the same gold medal for original composition in Bengali at the B.A. examination.”

Since the inception of the Padmavati Gold Medal up till 1931 the Bethune College supplied twenty-two recipients, a unique honour for any institution of any country. In the quinquennium under report, three students obtained this medal, Abha Sen in 1927, Kamalrani Sinha in 1929 and Nanibala Datta Gupta in 1931.

The *Quinquennial Review* of the Education Department of the period, also, acquaints us, amongst other things, with the progress made in the higher education of women in Bengal. The following table of successful women candidates in examinations in 1926-27 and 1931-32 will at once show the rapid strides of our women's progress in higher education:

		Matric	Int.	B. A.	M. A.
1926-27	...	157	89	44	4
1931-32	...	394	183	88	10

The portals of the Calcutta University were open to women long long ago. It was a happy sign of the times that they now resorted to Post-graduate studies in larger numbers. Students who took up Honours in their B.A., were mostly suited for these higher studies. Bethune College did its mite to prepare girls for these studies.

Good times were ahead. With the increase in number of students, the paucity of accommodation had been keenly felt for a long time. A way was found out providentially to solve this problem. Since October 1920, the college had occupied the entire school-building. During the quinquennium, 1927-32, a question was mooted as to the legality of the college occupying the building, which was erected on the property given in trust by Bethune and Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee for the sole use of Hindu girls. The college was open to girls, irrespective of caste and creed since 1880.

Though the college shared the same building with the school, no question was raised at the time as to its legality or otherwise. But the controversy gathered momentum, when the college continued to oust the school from its own home for years. The legal opinion of Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar, the Advocate-General, Bengal, was sought for early in 1929. Considering the *pros and cons* of the matter, Sir Nripendra was definitely of opinion that 'it is quite clear that neither Christian nor Mohammedan girls can be admitted in the school or the college, if the college happens to have been erected on the trust property.' He further opined that 'in law it (the Government) has no power to extend the trust to either Mohammedan or Christian girls.' This opinion held good about the attached hostel, too. In the face of this view, given in writing on January 22, 1929, by the Advocate-General, the Authorities could not sit idle. They had already managed to purchase the premises of the Christ Church School, adjacent to the Bethune College grounds at a cost of Rs. 2,50,000. This was done originally with the intention of providing additional hostel accommodation for the Bethune College. The Christ Church School was allowed to occupy the building till 30th April 1932, at a fixed rent. How these premises have, later on, been converted into the present habitat of the college is really an interesting story to be told later.

The corporate life of the college was nourished by the Old Girls' Guild, the Debating Society, socials and excursions. The college *Magazine* re-appeared after a lapse of nearly three years in March, 1931, under the editorship of Prof. Benoy Kumar Choudhury. Nanibala Datta Gupta was the student sub-editor. Classes in music were held as usual under the auspices of the Sangit Sangha. Instruction in physical culture continued as before. Miss Margaret Peterson was appointed physical instructress in December 1931 in place of Miss Rickets resigned.

The year 1932-33 was a landmark in the annals of women's education in Bengal. The number of arts colleges for Indian women rose from 4 to 6. These institutions included the women's section of the Vidyasagar College considered as a separate unit and the Intermediate classes started at the Victoria Institution, Calcutta. They registered 508 students on 31st March 1933, as compared with 366 on the corresponding date of the previous year. Besides this number, there were 346 girls reading in arts colleges for men and in the University. The Ashutosh College, Calcutta, and the Brojomohan College, Barisal, opened separate sections for women. In August 1932 the Government approved the proposal to admit women students in the Krishnagar College.

This opening of so many women's colleges or sections in 1932-33 meant much for the Bethune College. Though the higher education, for which the college stood, found a great impetus in this way, the unique position it had held so far in point of numerical strength, was no longer tenable. The strict discipline of a Government institution was also not a little responsible for the large decrease in number in this session. It should be mentioned here that the institution again faced troubles in February 1932, when the Civil Disobedience movement commenced for the second time in India. It was for these reasons that the students on the rolls of the college on 31st March 1933 fell so low as to 95 as against 149 in the previous year. The number of students in some of the classes even decreased to 4 or 5. The cost of educating a student in the college necessarily mounted, being Rs. 885 annually. Of this amount Rs. 816 was met from the provincial revenues. The college, however, excelled in the University examinations of 1932, beating even the premier institution of the province in point of percentage of passes. Of the 19 B.A. students, 17 passed, 4 securing Honours. Out of 24 I.A. candidates, 23 succeeded. There was cent-per-cent success in I.Sc., the number of passes being 5. The corporate life of the college was strengthened by the starting of the College Union.

India was passing through troublous times. The Round Table Conference held its sessions in London, thrice in the three years 1930-32, to thrash out a democratic constitution for India. Mahatma Gandhi attended the second session of the conference as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. It should be noted that Sarojini Naidu represented the progressive section of Indian womanhood at this session. The hopes with which the Congress joined it, were frustrated by the conspiracy of the vested interests with reactionary forces and groups of the country. Mahatma Gandhi returned to India, only to be clapped into prison. The second Civil Disobedience movement was not allowed to proceed further this time. The underground methods of the revolutionary party got the upper-hand. Youths have universally braved the hazardous path, and India was no exception. Women students including several ex-students of the institution, namely, Bina Das, Pritilata Waddeder and Kalpana Datta, did not lag behind, in risking their lives in pursuit of their national ideals.

The Bethune College suffered greatly. But just as in previous years it did not take much time to recoup its former position. By July, 1933, its numerical strength rose from 95 to 148. The number of candidates, appearing at this year's examination, was, however, small, but the results were not very unsatisfactory. Amongst the

eight B.A. candidates six passed, one securing Honours. Seventeen candidates sat for the I.A. and four for the I.Sc. examination, and twelve and three respectively passed in these examinations. I have referred to the starting of the College Union in the previous year. Under its auspices debates, excursions and trips were held with renewed enthusiasm. The *Bethune College Magazine* again came to light in March, 1933 after a lapse of one year, this time with Professor Chintaharan Chakravarty, M.A., Kavyatirtha, as the editor. The *Magazine*, under the editorship of Professor Chakravarty, became a regular forum of the academic and extra-academic activities of the college.

Calamity strengthens the bonds between man and man. The Bihar Earthquake in January, 1934, drew out the best that was in us to relieve distressed humanity. The students of the Bethune College could not remain idle. To raise sufficient funds, they organised a charity performance of *Vishnupriya* on the board of the University Institute and sent the net sale-proceeds for relief. Another notable event of the session (1933-34) was the retirement of Principal Rajkumari Das and installation in her place in January 1934, of Mrs. Tatini Das, an ex-alumnus of this institution, and an erudite scholar, holding the post of the Professor of Philosophy since July 1932. A number of important developments occurred during her regime as principal of the college.

The session following, 1934-35, promised well for the college. The number of students increased to 194. By the rearrangement of class-rooms and by the provision of holding classes in the Library Hall, increased accommodation was made available. Proper arrangements were made in this session for the teaching of Civics and Economics by the appointment of one more teacher for the subject.

The number of candidates and passes at the University examinations in 1934 also increased considerably. At the B.A. 11, the I.A. 32 and the I.Sc. 13 candidates appeared. Of these 8, 26, and 10 passed respectively. One girl secured Honours. Another, Miss Asima Mukherjee, won the Nawab Abdul Latif and Father Lafont Scholarship for standing first in science subjects among the lady students in the I.Sc. examination, besides one Senior Scholarship for girls. Miss Azizun-Nessa Khatun of the third year class won a medal at the Art exhibition held during the session at the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School. This year many a scholarship-holder of the Calcutta as well as the Dacca University got admitted into the first and the third year class of the college.

The corporate life of the students was strengthened by placing the College Union on a strong footing. A constitution, drawn up at

the instance of the Principal, was placed before a general meeting of the Union on the 14th July 1934, and passed. Provision was made in it for an all-sided growth of corporate life in the college through four Departments of the Union, *e.g.*, (1) Socials and Excursions, (2) Debates, (3) Magazine, and (4) Sports. During this session work began in all these branches. Excursions and trips were carried on under the guidance of the professors in different groups. Dr. D. N. Maitra delivered two lectures on the 28th July and the 18th August. The subject of the lectures was "Lesson and Experience of European Tour". The lectures were illustrated with lantern slides. The Old Girls' Guild, latterly known as Old Students' Association, instituted in the college on 3rd September 1921, was instrumental in the old girls keeping touch with their *Alma mater*, and the organisation of a College Day in the first week of September every year considerably helped in this. The association helped poor and deserving students by way of stipends. A constitution was also prepared for and passed by this body in 1934.

It should be mentioned to this year's credit that three new special prizes were offered. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta offered two annual prizes out of the Hemaprava Memorial Fund and out of the Kali Prasanna Das Gupta Fund to those students who would stand first respectively in Botany and Mathematics in the Intermediate examination of the Calcutta University among the students of the Bethune College. Prof. Mrs. Sarojini Dutt offered a prize to the most regular student of the second year Botany class in memory of her daughter Miss Madhuri Dutt. All the prizes were awarded for the first time in 1934. Mrs. Dutt also awarded this year a gold medal bearing her daughter's name to the best Bengali essay-writer amongst the first year students.

The storm that was raging so furiously in the political horizon of India, subsided considerably in 1935. The Joint Select Committee appointed by Parliament had thrashed out a draft constitution out of the babel of opinions of Indian politicians. It was passed by the Parliament and received Royal assent in course of the year. It came to be known as the "India Act of 1935". The Indian National Congress, too, at last resolved to make the best out of this Act. This had certainly a healthy repercussion on the educational institutions of the country.

The Bethune College had already passed the critical period. Its number of students rose, being 260 on the 31st March 1936, an increase of 66 over the preceding year. Results of the University examinations were uniformly good. In 1934 the Bethune College had occupied the first position among the affiliated women's colleges

and women's departments attached to men's colleges in Calcutta. The results of 1935 were no less satisfactory. All the students at the B.A. examination who had taken up Honours came out successful. Miss Latika Basu and Miss Pratibha Neogy respectively secured the fifth and the ninth place in the First Class among the successful candidates with Honours in Sanskrit. The passes in the B.A., I.A. and I.Sc. examinations were 4, 26, and 10 respectively, the percentage being 81.2 and 76.8 in the latter two. Only one student appeared in the B.Sc. for the first time from the college as a non-collegiate student and passed in the Pass course.

The college progressed during the year in more ways than one. It was affiliated to the Honours course in Economics, a subject that was growing popular even with women students. The physical education of the girls was especially looked after. On the retirement of Miss Margaret Peterson, on 1st March 1935, Miss Bidhan Nandini Majumdar, an Assistant Mistress of the collegiate school, was appointed physical instructress. She was all along full of enthusiasm for the development of a sporting spirit among the students. The Old Girls' Association offered a Silver Cup of Rs. 30/- for inter-class competition in games. This turned into an annual function. This was a sure means of cementing the bond of fellowship between the old and new alumni of the institution. The number of special prizes was augmented by the *Pramila Devi Gold Medal* instituted by Principal Mrs. Tatini Das in memory of her mother. This was to be awarded annually to the best student of the college, that is, the student who would secure the highest number of marks at the B.A. examination among students of the college. The Kshirode Chandra Roy Memorial Prize was for one year awarded by Prof. Miss P. Roy in memory of her father to the student of the Third year class who stood first in English (Honours) at the annual prize test competition. Both of them were awarded on the results of 1934. Students of the college began to win laurels even beyond the precincts of the college. On the Foundation Day celebrations of the Calcutta University, they, among the girls of the different colleges, led the March Past. But this was not all. In an essay competition held under the auspices of *The Modern Student* Miss Gaurirani Roy of the First year class joined and won a gold-centred medal in recognition of its excellence. The subject of the essay was 'Contribution of Western Education to the Emancipation of Indian Womanhood.'

Social functions of the college were held as usual. Socials, excursions and trips went on. Subjects discussed at the Debating Society and special lectures organised for the benefit of the students, were mostly of a high level. "The same curriculum should be prescribed

both for male and female students'' was discussed in a debate and the resolution was thrown out. This shows the opinion of our girls in the matter. Professor Nirmal Kanti Majumdar's lecture on the Joint Select Committee Report, apart from its educative value, served to bring the girls in touch with the topics of the day. The Old Students' Association, to which I have referred already, continued its work of helping poor students. The College Day, organised by the students of the college, was really excellent.

VII. YEARS OF UNINTERRUPTED PROGRESS (1936-41)

By 1936 the political horizon of India was almost clear. The India Act had been passed. All the political parties were now striving hard to make the best of the new order of things. When the conditions in India had thus settled down, the educational institutions also began to thrive.

The Bethune College had had to face a crisis a few years back. But it had gradually retrieved its former position as the foremost seat of learning for women. By the year 1936 we find the college again launching on a promising career. The number of students rose up to 277. This year's results in the University examination beat those of the former years, the percentage of passes being 81, 85 and 95, respectively, in the B.A., I.A. and I.Sc. Dipti Sarkar and Rama Sarkar topped the list of successful female candidates in the Intermediate Arts and Science examinations of the University. By virtue of these successes the former received the Womesh Chandra Mukherjee Silver Medal and the latter the Nawab Abdul Latif and Father Lafont Science Scholarship, besides the other college prizes. Aruna Sinha won the Bankim Chandra Silver Medal and Nagendra Gold Medal for standing first in Bengali composition amongst the women candidates. Seven out of nine candidates secured Honours in different subjects. It should be noted here that science was becoming increasingly popular with the girls.

The improvement of the college was marked in other directions also. With the increase in number, the girls had to be accommodated in hostels managed by the Brahmo Samaj outside the precincts of the college. This drawback was removed in January 1936, by the opening of a large women's hostel adjacent to the college. The management of the hostel was vested in a Committee of which the Director of Public Instruction was President and the Principal of the college *ex-officio* Secretary. The post of the physical instructress was made permanent. With the help of the

physical instructress, Miss Bidhan Nandini Majumdar, welcome improvements were made in arrangements for sports. Basket-ball and tennis-quoit were in full swing. Students of the college won honours in inter-collegiate functions, such as debates, essay competition and the like. An innovation was introduced in the management of the Common Room. Books and magazines of the Common Room were taken over by the students with a view to look after them under the direction of Prof. Mrs. Zoha. Other functions, annual and casual, of the college continued with zeal during the year.

Of the sports, a special note should be taken. The inaugural ceremony of the Annual Sports of the Bethune College and Collegiate School, for which a cup had been offered by the Old Girls' Association, came off on the 31st March 1936 on the extensive grounds of the college compound in the presence of a distinguished gathering of ladies and gentlemen. Dr. W. A. Jenkins, the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, presided on the occasion and Mrs. Jenkins gave away the prizes. The Old Girls' Association decided on April 2, 1936 to award this prize annually on the results of a game played between the old students and the present students.

The year 1937 was politically significant. The new constitution was to take effect from 1st April. Elections were held in different provinces to form autonomous Governments. Women also contested in the elections. Indeed, the India Act of 1935 opened new vistas for Indian women. They were given the opportunity to take their legitimate share in the Government of the country not only as voters and legislators, but also as members of the Cabinet. The higher education of women received a great impetus. Women's colleges were filled with students to their utmost capacity.

The Bethune College claimed the highest number of students this session, being 306. The Christ Church School Building was not yet made ready for the reception of the girls. So it can be easily understood how hard pressed the college was for space. The college was full of life. Its activities in various directions attracted public notice and eulogy. The Bethune College joined the University Foundation Day celebrations. It acquitted itself best among colleges for women participating in the parade and March Past and won the University Foundation Day Cup. In the University examinations the college fared equally well. Seven candidates in the B.A. were recipients of Honours in various subjects. Amongst the B.A., I.A. and I.Sc. examinees the percentage of passes was also very high.

The internal activities of the college were praiseworthy. These mainly centred round the Old Girls' Association and the College

Union. The Basket Ball Tournament between the old and the existing girls was held on College Day in September, 1937. The Association made a Donation of Rs. 100 to the college for preparing an Academic Honours Board. This was done accordingly. The Board contains, in bold characters, the names of all students who have graduated from the college with Honours since the year 1919. Socials and excursions, debates and athletics, etc., were carried on with renewed vigour under the auspices of the College Union. Such subjects as "Politics should not play any part in student life" being debated and lost, show which way the wind was blowing.

Some other happenings during the year may be mentioned. The Principal offered another medal, the Pramila Devi Silver Medal, to be awarded to the student who stood first among students passing the Intermediate examination from this college and securing 80 per cent of the total marks. Miss Maya De, a whole time teacher, was appointed to the post of permanent Physical Instructress. This resulted in a more exclusive attention being bestowed on the physical instruction of the girls. Two very mournful deaths occurred this year. Dr. Syamadas Mukherjee, an eminent Mathematician of international fame, who was connected with the college in the early years of his career, passed away. After retirement from Government service, he had taken charge of the Department of Pure Mathematics in the University of Calcutta. Again Syamacharan Gupta whose connection with the institution as Head Master of the Bethune Collegiate School and as a teacher of Mathematics in the college classes was close and intimate for a pretty long time, also passed away.

The demand for the higher education of women persisted in 1938. Provincial autonomy had vested the Muslims of Bengal with Governmental powers. This acted as an incentive to Muslim women to take to higher education in larger numbers. In spite of the opinion of the Advocate-General of Bengal to the contrary, the Bethune College had been admitting girls other than of Hindu extraction, though it still occupied the old buildings. But this did not satisfy the Muslim League Government. They wanted a separate college where a majority of Muslim girls could be admitted. This was one of the main reasons for the opening of the "Lady Brabourne College" in the Park Circus area the next year—July 1939.

The numerical strength of the Bethune College stood at 306. The supply of more accommodation for the college could not brook any delay. Repairs of the Christ Church School Building, acquired seven years ago, were now in progress. Government scholarships for Indian women were created for advanced studies in the United

Kingdom. The state of higher studies of women in Bengal in 1938 will be evident from the following figures :

M.A.	Candidates	}	42	Passed	37
M.Sc.	„				
B.A.	„		364	„	247
I.A.	„		898	„	559

Results of the University examinations of the Bethune College were quite satisfactory in 1938. Of the B.A. Honours candidates, 16 in number, 8 succeeded, and amongst the pass candidates, 17 passed, 3 with distinction. Quazi Akhtar Banu, a student of the college, received the Gangamani Devi Gold medal on securing the highest number of marks in Mental and Moral Philosophy among lady graduates of 1938. The college did also very well in the Intermediate in Arts and Science examinations. Seven of the thirteen special scholarships awarded to girls in 1938, were won by the students of the college.

Corporate life of the college drew its nourishment from the various activities of the College Union and Old Girls' Association. College Day was celebrated with great ceremony on the 25th September under the auspices of the College Union. On this occasion games between the old and existing students were played as usual. This day was made more pleasant and memorable by the dramatic performance of *Raja* of Rabindra Nath Tagore. Memorial meetings, excursions, steamer-trips and other socials were held as usual. Students conducted debates with enthusiasm. The Old Students' Association granted two monthly stipends of Rs. 4/- each for deserving girls from the Old Students' Fund. This Association as well as the institution, however, suffered a great loss this year in the death of Miss Hironmayi Sen. She was for a good many years the Head Mistress of the Bethune Collegiate School, Superintendent of the Hostel and Secretary to the Old Students' Association.

The work of the college expanded greatly in the following session, 1939-40. The number of students remained the same, *i.e.*, 302. The Muslim girls numbered as many as 29. The problem of accommodation in the Bethune College was at last about to be solved by the remodelling of the Christ Church School Building acquired by the Government for its extension. The extended affiliation of the college in Arabic, Persian and Urdu in this session removed a long-felt grievance of Muslim students seeking admission to it.

The results of the University examination were highly satisfactory in 1939. There were cent-per-cent success in I.Sc. and 95.5% in the

I.A. The percentage of passes were also almost as high as in B.A. Pass. Socials, excursions, debates and athletics were resorted to as before. The Old Students' Association granted three stipends of Rs. 4/- this year. It should be noted that two veteran professors of the college, Debendra Nath Roy and Sorojini Dutt, retired having reached the age of retirement.

The international situation was quite disheartening. War once more came upon the world. World War II broke out in Europe on 3rd September, Germany attacking Poland. This was the signal for great upheavals. England declared war against Germany. India naturally got involved. The Indian National Congress was running the machinery of the State in as many as eight out of eleven autonomous provinces. It refused to support the war and the Congress Ministries resigned. Troubles again loomed large in India and the educational institutions would have to feel their effect soon.

The new session in July 1940 saw the college removed to its new quarters. The Christ Church School Building had by now been thoroughly overhauled for meeting the requirements of the college. The new building provided for attractive lecture-theatres, well-equipped laboratories, a spacious Common-room Hall and a large reading room attached to the Library. After about thirty years of appeals for more space, a commodious building was placed at the disposal of the college. By the removal of the college to the new building the legal position of the college was retrieved so far as its habitation was concerned. The number of students on 31st July 1940 rose up to 365. Results achieved in the Intermediate examination were highly encouraging. A comparative analysis of the results of the different colleges reveals that the position of the Bethune College, among Government colleges, was second only to the Presidency College, as regards the number of students securing the first hundred positions, annexing 'letters' and obtaining 'stars'. Miss Kanakprabha Bandyopadhyaya topped the list of successful female candidates in the Intermediate examination from this college. She thus earned the unique honour of being eligible, for the first time, for the award of the Shyamacharan Gupta Memorial Medal. This medal had been introduced by Principal Mrs. Tatini Das in memory of her father to be awarded to the student who secures an asterisk and stands first from the Bethune College at the Intermediate examination.

The corporate life of the college was strengthened in various ways. Indoor games were introduced in the Common-room Hall. Students of the college joined the women's Inter-Collegiate Sports Association. The annual inter-class Basket Ball Tournament was

held. It was decided that Old Students' Cup would be awarded henceforth to this tournament rather than between the old and new students. Socials, excursions and debates continued as before.

A separate poor fund was instituted in the college to help the poor but deserving students. The college was fortunate in this session to receive a donation of six thousand and three hundred rupees from Dr. Bimala Churn Law, M.A., B.L., Ph.D. Dr. Law made over Government Promissory Notes of the face value of this amount for the creation of a Trust Fund, called 'Bimala Churn Law Free-studentships Fund'. The income of this fund was to be utilized for awarding two or more free-studentships to meritorious poor students of the Bethune College.

From 1939 onwards men teachers of the college were rapidly substituted by women teachers through transfers and new appointments. All vacancies were filled by women teachers. Thus we see that the desire of Miss Janau made known to Government in 1917 was at last fulfilled. The scheme for replacing men teachers by women teachers was being given effect to vigorously by Government.

World War II was spreading rapidly. France lay prostrate before the mechanised army of Nazi Germany. In India the British Viceroy was doing all he could to justify India's joining the War. The British Government proclaimed themselves as defenders of democracy. But the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi could not be convinced by this plea and the *Satyagraha* movement was launched. The ravages of the war abroad and the tussle between the Government on one side and the Indian National Congress on the other on the question of India's participation in the war, at times intermingled with the demand of Pakistan by the Muslim League under the guidance of Mr. Mahammed Ali Jinnah, were exercising men's minds during the year. And the academic institutions of the country, too, appeared to be threatened from more sides than one.

In the year 1941 we find a lull before the storm. The Bethune College had the largest number of students on the rolls, being 326. In the new habitation it possessed ample scope of expansion. And truly it was expanded during these two years. Biology was added to the subjects affiliated for the I.Sc. The staff of the college, which now consisted of twenty professors and lecturers, was strengthened during the session by the appointment of a lecturer each in Botany and Zoology for the new subject Biology. The results of the examinations were generally good, there being cent-per-cent passes in the B.A. Honours. The different functions of the college continued as before under the auspices of the College Union and the

Old Students' Association. But the devastating World War took a new turn in the East when, on the 7th December 1941, Japan stormed the Pearl Harbour, the American naval base in the Pacific. The East was threatened, and the British Government began to tighten the screw.

VIII. DURING THE WORLD WAR II AND AFTER (1942-49)

The World War II has been called a totalitarian war which wanted the opponent to be wiped out of the face of the earth. With the fall of France the Allies meant only Britain and America. Now Soviet Russia strengthened the hands of the Allies by joining them. Their opponents were Germany, Italy and Japan. The war reached a critical stage in 1942. Japan advanced rapidly in South-East Asia. Singapore fell. The Japanese army marched through Malay to Burma. Burma, too, shared no better fate than Singapore. The security of India was threatened. Japanese bombers flew over Eastern India. To dislocate the nerve-centre of war preparations Calcutta was bombed. The British Government made serious attempts to combat the Japanese onslaught. The Allied army was stationed throughout India, but as a precautionary measure against bombing, the A.R.P. personnel was formed and quartered in different parts of the city.

In this as in any other catastrophes, education became the first casualty. The Bethune College and School with their new and old buildings, as well as their spacious compound, were requisitioned by the Government for the A.R.P. early in 1942. Lady Abala Bose, a prominent member of the Governing Body and one of the earliest alumni of the Bethune College, came to its rescue. She was kind enough to offer the Bani Bhawan (industrial home for women) for housing the college at a considerable sacrifice. The premises were rented by the Bengal Government. This building was, however, too small for the college. The collegiate school was closed for a year and, when it reopened in April 1943, it had also to be housed in the same building. The school classes took place in the morning. Various amenities and extra-academic activities of the college were necessarily curtailed. Due to the fear of bombing, a large number of people left the city. The number of students consequently fell heavily from 326 in 1941 to 255 in 1942. These troubles, however, did not very much affect the results of University examinations, the percentage of passes being 68%, 50% and 72% respectively in the I.A., I.Sc., and B.A. (Pass and Honours). This year amongst the 49

passes, as many as 16 secured Honours, 5 being placed in the first class.

Excursions, pleasure-trips, debates and sports could not be continued on a large scale. The College Day was observed on the 16th of December, 1942. A comic play, *Bandhur Biya* ("Friend's Marriage") was performed by the girls of the college. Outdoor games and sports were continued in a miniature form in the small compound of the Bani Bhawan. The *Bethune College Magazine*, which had been continued for more than a decade and served as an organ of the college in all its aspects, had to stop its publication in this emergency. The stoppage of the magazine which had attained high efficiency these years, was a serious loss.

Some important events of the year should be particularly noticed. The Indian National Congress, representing the nationalist section of our people, was dissatisfied with the attitude of the British Government towards Indian aspirations. The Congress demanded autonomy even in defence matters. Sir Stafford Cripps came to India in March, 1942 with some proposals from the Churchill Government, popularly known as the Cripps' proposals. But the negotiations failed on the rock of defence. Cripps went back. In August 1942 Congress proposed to start a countrywide *Satyagraha* movement. Mahatma Gandhi along with other Congress leaders were imprisoned. But this time the response from the people was as spontaneous as it was widespread. Nothing on earth could stop it. The military was employed to crush the movement. When all the men-leaders were put into prison, women accepted the challenge and came to the fore-front. This movement was so intense and wide that it won the appellation of the "August Revolution". To add to the trouble, in October a cyclone ravaged the lower part of Midnapore and the 24-Perganas, causing huge loss of life and property. Government measures to transfer food from the areas where Japanese attack was imminent, resulted in severe food-scarcity. A widespread famine stared Bengal in the face.

The session of 1943 started with disaster facing the province. The condition of educational institutions in the face of these disasters, actual and potential, can better be imagined than described. The number of students on the rolls of the college on 31st March 1943 fell so low as to 108, as against 255 and 326 on the corresponding dates of the preceding two years. The number of candidates in this year's University examinations from the college also decreased considerably, being only 17 in the I.A., 9 in the I.Sc. and 17 in the B.A., both Pass and Honours. The corresponding number in the previous year was 102, 14 and 68 respectively.

Here we pause for a moment. The cumulative effect of the disastrous events of the year before, and the disastrous policy of the Government to tackle them, was the great Bengal Famine of 1943. In intensity it stood only second to the famine of 1770, better known in Bengal as **छियात्तरेर मन्वन्तर**. Lakhs of people lost their lives for want of food and raiment. Bengal rose up as one man to fight this demon of hunger. She did what she could, with so small resources at her disposal. In these days of calamity, the Bethune College also did its mite. The social and all other functions were stopped for the year. The funds of the Old Students' Association were all spent for the relief of the famine-stricken people. The staff and the students also paid as liberally as possible. Sports of the college, however, continued. Students joined Bengal Women's Sports held at the Mohan Bagan Grounds on 23rd February, 1943 under the presidency of Dr. Jenkins. One of the first year students won the Cup.

Troubles due to the War persisted in 1944. Subhas Chandra Bose, interned at his house, had crossed the Indian border sometime in 1941 utterly nonplussing the Intelligence Branch and joined the enemy. He had now gone from Germany to Japan and from there reached Singapore to mobilise and lead the Indian Army and the Indian nationals that had been left at the mercy of the Japanese. With the help of the latter Subhas Chandra was soon able to prepare an army popularly known as I.N.A. (Indian National Army) and launched an attack against the Allies, especially the Britishers. Early in 1944 this army reached the territory of Manipore through Upper Burma. This was too much for the Allies. Just as in Europe, they took the offensive here too. And the fighting became more intensive. The year 1944 was thus very critical both for the Allies and their opponents. Their fate was hanging in the balance.

A large section of the people who were so upset by the happenings of the previous years, settled down to the new conditions. It seemed that it would take years for the educational institutions to regain their former position. Yet somehow they were able to meet the crisis. The number of students of the Bethune College that stood so low in 1943, increased on the 31st March 1944 to 136. More candidates appeared this year at the University examinations, the percentage of passes was also a bit more satisfactory. Most of the extra-academic activities of the college remained curtailed, and others took place in a miniature form. The sports, however, continued as before. The College Day, the Annual Function of the old and existing students of the college, was observed as usual on the 9th September. The students of the college entertained

the old students by dramatising *Chira Kumar Sabha* of Rabindra Nath.

Even at the end of 1944 the Allies made no perceptible progress in the different theatres of War against the enemy. Soviet Russia fought hard against Germany. The Allies bombed the Japanese centres of activities in Burma and Singapore. The year 1945, however, dawned with new hope of victory for the Allies, the enemy everywhere showing the signs of exhaustion. As the months rolled on, the latter's fall became certain. In quick succession Italy and Germany were defeated. Mussolini and Hitler, the respective Dictators of the two countries, with all their associates, met their end. The Allies won. But there was a very thin line of demarcation between victory and defeat, so far as sufferings and losses of the victorious and the vanquished were concerned. Amongst the Allies Britain suffered heavily. She was badly in need of reconstruction. The legacy of war left the subject peoples of the East politically conscious. Like their rulers, they also had gone through immense sufferings and troubles. They would no longer brook their tutelage. The exploits of the I.N.A. under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose inspired the Indians with a new sense of freedom.

The troubles that faced India all these years were gradually dissipating. But the tranquillity that is required for any educational institution to thrive, was still wanting. And the Bethune College was no exception to this. The number of students again showed a tendency to decrease in 1945, being 127 on the 31st March. The number of candidates and passes in the University examinations consequently decreased. Results were also not up to the mark. Social and other functions of the college did not take place in this year. The College Day could not be held till 2nd February 1946. *Raja* was played on this occasion. It should be noted that the college returned to its own buildings in January 1946, and the College Day was celebrated there.

On the 31st March 1946, the numerical strength of the college again rose to 136. Since then it went on gradually increasing. The number of candidates sent up for the University examinations, remained almost static. Results, however, presented an upward curve. The percentage of passes in the I.A., I.Sc. and B.A. (Pass and Honours) respectively stood at 88.5%, 69.2% and 47%. This year also was a year of immense troubles. The historic I.N.A. trial at Red Fort, Delhi, the R.I.N. Revolt at Bombay, the frequent students' strikes all over the country—each one of these deeply agitated the public mind. This could not but have repercussions on academic institutions. But to crown all, came the Direct Action Day

on 16th August 1946, at the command of the Muslim League to bring about Pakistan, that is, a sovereign independent state to be sliced out of India. This played havoc with the life of the city. The academic institutions of Calcutta, generally, and the women's colleges, in particular, were very much affected. The various functions of the Bethune College that had been held in abeyance so long, could not take place even now. The College Day function was delayed. It was held on the 8th March 1947. This time both the old and new students joined in larger numbers. The Women's College Hostel, adjacent to the college, closed during the four years (1942-45) of the War, did not however open. An idea of the condition of the college during the war years can be had from the *Quinquennial Report of the Bethune College for 1942-47* submitted by the Principal, Mrs. Tatini Das:

"The quinquennium under review records the tale of education in *duress*. What with the prolonged occupation of our college building and compound by the A.R.P. for full four years of the War emergency period, and what with frequent dislocation of work due to communal riot directly on our re-occupation of the old site, the college suffered, as was inevitable, a terrible set-back in respect of the residence of students, tutorial supervision and general administration work of the college, both creative and conservative. We have reasons to be grateful that the institution could somehow be preserved from what at one time looked like virtual extinction, in its life of increasing usefulness, destined to complete the hundredth year of its existence in 1949.

"I should be failing in a public duty if I were not to place on record the benevolent sympathy and service extended to the institutions by Lady Abala Bose in accommodating us at a considerable loss at the premises of the 'Vidyasagar Bani-Bhavan' (an industrial institution for widows) all through the troublous days of the college, dislodged from her ancient site. Purpose, it has been wisely observed, is but the slave of memory, and as stung by the memory of dark days of adversity from which we have just emerged, we are expected to resume the continuity of progress, pool all our resources together, and in the atmosphere of a New Order, forge ahead with the dynamic of unachieved ideals of the past."

The year 1947 came to India with a message of hope. The troubles of 1946 had their surfeit. In the political sphere things were taking a practical shape. After a century of struggle, freedom was at last in sight. But now a very high price had to be paid for it. That is, India was to be divided into the Indian Union and Pakistan. After almost two centuries of foreign domination any kind of self-

rule appeared welcome to our leaders. The educational institutions, too, found a respite. The Bethune College fared well this session. The number of students on the rolls of the college rose to 203 on 31st March 1947, as against 136 on the corresponding date in the previous year. More candidates sat for the University examinations than the preceding year, the number of passes being 29, 11 and 12 in I.A., I.Sc. and B.A. (Pass and Honours) respectively. Six students got Honours this year. In sports, too, they excelled. They joined the Women's Sports Federation and won distinction. One stood first in Spear-throwing, one in Balance Race, and another stood second in Short-put. The college was fortunate to get back some of its teachers who had gone abroad on study leave.

On return to the old site, the social and extra-academic functions of the Vidyalaya commenced with full vigour. One of the special functions of the year was the holding of a memorial meeting of Rabindra Nath Tagore. Miss Lotika Ghose, Professor of English and a reputed scholar, presided over the function. The memorial meetings of Bethune and Vidyasagar took place. The College Union also began work with enthusiasm. The *Bethune College Magazine* was revived after a lapse of six years, and was published early in 1948. This time the editor was Prof. Miss Lila Roy, the student-editor being Miss Ila Mitra. The Union organised debates on important topical subjects, such as, "Partition of Bengal" and "Mother-tongue as medium of instruction." There was also a discussion on the policy of Food Control. Besides the College Union, the Old Students' Association, the Common Room Committee and the Poor Fund Committee were reorganised.

The most important political event of this year was the transfer of power by the British Government to Indian hands after the division of India. The transfer of power took place on the 15th August, 1947. On the 14th August at midnight India became free. The people heralded the new freedom with utmost joy. As an embodiment of freedom the flag of the Indian Union was hoisted high in place of the Union Jack in public buildings. The Bethune College along with all other institutions took part in the rejoicings. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghose, the first Chief Minister of Bengal in free India, presided over the flag-hoisting ceremony. The old students of the college joined the rejoicings in large numbers. The Chief Minister again visited the college along with the Minister of Education, S. J. Nikunja Behari Maity. Dr. Ghose discussed the remodelling of education on lines suited to the new order. Mr. Maity stressed the need of a college hostel. It should be mentioned in this connection that the College Women's Hostel adjacent to the college,

was built in 1936 to accommodate mainly the students of the Bethune College, though those of other colleges were allowed to lodge and board in it. The Hostel was closed during the war years. The building in which it was housed, is now in the possession of the All-India Women's Conference. The A.I.W.C. runs a hostel for women at 10 Nalini Sarkar Street in North Calcutta. It has been stipulated that sixty per cent of the boarders shall be taken from amongst the Bethune College students, it having no separate hostel of its own. It may be remembered that the Bethune College possessed a hostel, then called a boarding-house, since 1878. Both the students of the college and the collegiate school could reside in it. This hostel now came to be reserved only for the students of the Bethune Collegiate School.

The joys and hopes of the session were seriously hampered by the death of Mahatma Gandhi on the 30th January, 1948. Gloom spread all over India. Memorial meetings were held throughout the country to pay respectful homage to the Father of the Nation. A well-attended meeting was held in the Bethune College jointly by the college and school on 14th February under the presidency of the Hon'ble Ray Harendra Nath Chaudhury, then Minister of Education. Dr. Saroj Kumar Das, Qazi Abdul Wadud and Sj. Jatindra Kumar Biswas, among the invitees, spoke on the various aspects of the departed great and Srimati Lotika Ghose offered homage on behalf of the staff and students of the institutions.

The next session 1948-49 did not pass peacefully. The Hindus living in East Bengal were not feeling happy over the state of things there. They began to leave their hearths and homes in thousands, if not in lakhs. This created a serious problem for many students who came over to the Indian Union. It was a good sign of the times that our educational institutions absorbed as many of them as possible, the Government institutions not excepted. The Bethune College, too, accepted a large number, so much so that its strength almost doubled on the 31st March 1948. Results of the University examinations were as well as could be expected. The number of passes in the I.A. and I.Sc. in all the divisions as well as the B.A. Pass and Honours in 1948 was as follows: .

	I	II	III	Total
I.A.	18	21	9	48
I.Sc.	8	4	1	13
B.A.	12 (pass)	4 (2nd class Honours)		16

The functions of the college continued as usual. For some time past the students and staff were thinking of how to celebrate the

Centenary of the institution in a befitting manner. With high expectations, though with small resources, it began the work of organisation.

The session, 1949-50, which was also the Centenary year, witnessed some innovations in the college. The student-strength of the college reached 497 on 31st March 1949. An important change effected in 1949 was the raising of fees in the following scale:

Rs. 8/- per student for I.A. class

Rs. 10/- per student for the I.Sc. class

Rs. 10/- per student for the B.A. class

Rs. 12/- per student for the B.A. Hons. class.

This cent-per-cent increase in the scale of fees is accountable only when we consider the high prices of essential goods, and the consequent increase of expenses in the management of the college. This increase did not hamper the rise in the number of its students. On the 31st March, this year (1950) the students on the rolls were 562, the highest number the college has ever had. Results of the University examinations of the college in 1949 were not unsatisfactory. The percentage of passes in the I.A., I.Sc., and B.A. (Pass and Honours.) being 75%, 70% and 50% respectively. Seven candidates got Honours, being placed in the second class.

The College is at present affiliated to the University of Calcutta in B.A. (Pass) in the following subjects:—English, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Bengali, History, Economics and Mathematics; and in Honours in English, Sanskrit, Mathematics, Philosophy and Economics. It is also affiliated in the I.A., and I.Sc. in English, Sanskrit, Logic, Botany, History, Bengali, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Civics and Biology.

We have already seen that the Bethune College was planning to celebrate the Centenary year in a suitable manner. All the energies of the students and the staff were marshalled to make these celebrations a success. One thing needs special mention here. The Bethune College Union stood equal to the occasion. The publication of the *Magazine* was stopped for the year and all its funds were transferred to the account of the special Centenary Commemoration Volume. It was mainly for the wise and timely decision of the Union that a nucleus of funds was created and paved the way for the present volume being published. Preliminary arrangements made, the inauguration of the Centenary year of the institution was observed on the 7th May, 1949 with grand solemnity by ceremonial planting of three saplings of Asoka and Bakul trees in the college premises by Mrs. Manika Devi and Mrs. K. C. De, two past alumni of the

institution, as well as the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. This was done in accordance with the method followed by J. E. D. Bethune on 6th May 1850. S. K. Kshitimohan Sen Sastri of Santiniketan conducted the ceremony according to our ancient Vedic rites.

A strong and influential Committee was formed to celebrate the Centenary year. The actual celebration came off on the 28th, 29th, 30th January and 1st February 1950. Most of the functions of the college, held in abeyance during the session, took place on these days. A detailed account of the celebrations is given elsewhere in this volume. The celebrations were indeed a tremendous success.

IX. CONCLUSION

One word more and I have done. To make any academic institution a success, three factors, at least, have got to work in harmony, namely, the management, the instructing staff and the students. It is clear from the above narrative that the success of the Bethune College and School, in spite of occasional lapses, was primarily due to the harmonious working of these three factors.

The Vidyalaya has been fortunate to have, even from its inception, prominent educationists and public men, both European and Indian, on its Managing Committee. In the course of the story their activities have been referred to. In this connection the name of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the doughty champion of the cause of women, at once comes to our mind. There were others, too, who served the institution honestly and zealously in various capacities. These included such stalwarts as Monomohun Ghose, Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur, Justice John Budd Phear, Chief Justice Sir Richard Garth, Durgamohan Das, Ananda Mohan Bose, Umesh Chandra Dutt, Sarada Charan Mitra (Justice, Calcutta High Court) and Dr. Sir Nilratan Sircar. Since the introduction of the New Regulations, the Management of the institution was divided, and that of the college came to be known as the Governing Body, and of the School as the Managing Committee. On the former body were eminent educationists, such as Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, Sir D. P. Sarbadhikary, Sir P. C. Ray, Dr. Chunilal Bose, Prof. Benoyendra Nath Sen, Prof. S. C. Mahalanabis, Dr. P. K. Ray, Mrs. P. K. Ray and Lady Abala Bose. During the last few decades the Bethune College passed through varied difficulties. And it was due to the wise guidance of the Governing Body that it succeeded in overcoming them.

The instructing staff of the college could compete with any of the first class Government institutions. It consisted of erudite scholars, eminent educationists and efficient teachers. That the Bethune College has been raised today to the status of a first grade institution was not a little due to the selfless devotion with which they prosecuted their work. The list of the staff of the college will at once show that at one time or another prominent scholars with Indian and foreign reputation were on it. Apart from the Principals of the college, some of whom had European qualifications, there were professors and teachers, pre-eminently fit for their respective subjects. Professors like Sasibhusan Dutt, Dwijadas Dutt, Mrs. Kamini Roy, Bijoygopal Mukherjee, Chandra Mohan Tarkalankar, Paresh Nath Sen, Dr. Shyamadas Mukherjee, Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya, Debendra Nath Ray, Dineshchandra Bhattacharyya, Kumudbandhab Chatterjee, Umesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, Mrs. Sarojini Dutt, Chintaharan Chakraborty and Mrs. Amiya Banerjee were assets to the institution. The University of Calcutta recognised the merits of some of the professors by appointing them lecturers in the Post-Graduate Department. I refrain from referring to the present staff, some of whom, too, have got foreign qualifications of a high order and are efficient as teachers. Women's education has advanced so much today that the staff now consists mostly of women both in the arts and science sections.

I have laid stress on the achievements and successes of the alumni of the college in their proper place. In the recent history of our country they have found a suitable place. Such names as those of Chandramukhi Bose, Kadambini Ganguli, Kamini Roy, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Kumudini Das, Kumudini Bose, Jyotirmoyi Ganguli, Santa Devi, Sita Devi, Sujata Roy, Tatini Das—all alumni of the college, are names of which any women's institution in the land may be proud. They have shown their brilliance in the different spheres of their life. The first students of the Bethune School deserve particular mention, when we take into consideration the difficulties and disadvantages of those days. The names of Kundamala and Bhubanmala have come down to us as belonging to the first batch of students of this institution. Daughters of the prominent persons of the day, such as Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, Sambhunath Pandit, Raj Narain Bose and Dinabandhu Mitra, were sent to the school. The Lady Superintendents of those days, invariably Europeans, used to visit Indian homes and induced our women to send their wards to the school. All honour to them.

In later days there was evident some sort of disharmony between

the students and their immediate authorities. But this was only a passing phase. With the disappearance of temporary political tensions harmony was restored between them. In point of academic and extra-academic activities the achievements of the college can compare favourably with the best institution of the country. The academic honours won by the students of the college in the Universities at home and abroad in recent times, have enhanced the reputation of the college. To mention only two instances, Dr. Surama Mitra, the first woman recipient of the Doctorate in Philosophy and Dr. Ashima Mukherjee (now, Dr. Chatterjee), that of the Doctorate in Science, were the ex-students of this institution. There is every reason to hope that the college will create new records for itself from day to day.

I have now reached the end of my story. Girls' education was not new even in the early decades of the nineteenth century. But it was John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune who gave it a new shape and started a school on modern scientific lines and in a strictly non-sectarian way. The beginning was very small and unassuming. But the school was founded on the rock of the eternal urge and so could not die. It developed gradually into what it is today. From this institution women's education received an unusual impetus. It has now spread to the furthest corners of the country. Indian women have given sufficient proof of their ability to win the highest academic honours. They have taken to Arts and Science with equal ardour. In literature, politics and social service they have made their mark. They are now equal partners of men in every sphere of life. They have not neglected their home. As the mistress of the home, they are making it healthier, happier and more beautiful.

We bow down to J. E. D. Bethune in deep gratitude. Along with Bethune let us also remember this day his Indian associates, without whose unstinted assistance the sapling could not possibly take root. Today we should also recall the self-less devotion and activities of those of our countrymen who helped this sapling to grow into a large tree, giving shade to the traveller and adding lustre to the neighbourhood. There were others, again, who, not connected with the institution, did immense service to the cause of women. They also deserve our grateful remembrance.

APPENDIX

I. MR. BETHUNE'S SPEECH

(At the opening of the Calcutta Female School on May 7, 1849.)

My friends,—I understand that it is expected of me that I should address a few words to you on the occasion on which we are met here. This is a day of no common gladness and triumph to all of us: to you as fathers, because it is impossible that these feelings of natural affection which form the better part of every man deserving the name should not lead you to rejoice in the hope which this new institution holds out for the improvement of those who are most dear to you: to me, because it is an unspeakable gratification that I have been privileged to become an instrument in furthering this great work; and, although the blessings of a wife and children are not mine, yet I can feel something of a father's joy, in the consciousness that I have done something towards heightening and ennobling that joy in those friends whom I see around me, and I trust also, in multitudes of others, who will not be slow to follow your example.

The scheme which is developed here today has not been lightly conceived or hastily undertaken by me. Among the documents which were earliest put into my hands connected with this country, even before I left England, were the reports of the progress of education, and the proof of the proficiency of the students in the government institutions of which I am now the official head. These reports led me irresistibly to the conclusion that in a country in which the youngmen had been subjected to this system of training, now for more than thirty years, it was highly probable that the day could not be far distant, when an imperative call would be made for extending the benefits of education by which the youngmen of Bengal had so largely profited, to the other half of its inhabitants. I believed that you, having felt in your own person that elevating influence of a good education, would before long begin to feel the want of companions, the cultivation of whose taste and intellect might correspond in some degree to your own; that you would gradually begin to understand how infinitely the happiness of domestic life may be enhanced by the charm which can be thrown over it by the graceful virtues and elegant accomplishments of well educated women; that you would be led to the reflection, in your study of the history of other nations, that in the degree of estimation in which females are held, the amount of mental culture to which they attain, and the extent of influence which they are permitted to exercise over the tastes and habits of society, the best and surest test may be found of the degree in which one nation surpasses another in civilization.

I thought, too, that you could not fail to discover, as soon as you began to reflect at all upon the matter, how infinite is the importance of the part which every mother has to perform in the education of her offspring. When

the young child is first struggling to the use of his reason, when with every hour, new sights, new experiences, new ideas are crowding in multitudes upon his infant mind, of what vast consequence is it that from his mother, to whose personal care he is necessarily entrusted, by whom alone his physical wants can be supplied, he should also be able to draw that healthful food for his reason, his taste, his imagination, which may train and educate him to grow up to a great and good man. What wonder then, that the character of a nation would depend so intimately on the character of its women. And this is not felt in childhood alone, but in every relation of life the power of female influence is acknowledged ; and the importance cannot be too highly estimated of doing all in our power to secure that this influence shall always be exerted in the direction which points to justice, to virtue and to honour.

These were the ideas which occupied my thought even before I landed on an Indian shore, and since my arrival here, everything which I was able to learn or observe confirmed me in their correctness and that similar ideas were rapidly working their way in Bengal. I heard of men educating their wives, their daughters, their sisters. True, these were individual instances ; and in some cases it was done privately, and as it were by stealth, for it is indeed no light matter to run counter to the preconceived opinions of a whole people in any land, and especially in this country, where you are supposed to cling with peculiar fondness to your old institutions. But all these indications of a new way of thinking on this subject were symptomatic and encouraging.

Further, it was a hopeful reflection that the seclusion and the ignorance to which your females have been so long condemned do not belong to the oldest customs of your nation, that they are themselves innovations, brought in, as I believe, by a courtly imitation of your Mahammedan invaders. I find in the translation of your old works of imagination and legends that the daughters of your sages and wives of your princes are described as enjoying a degree of personal freedom and as adorned with learning and accomplishments, from which their successors have been long systematically debarred. I do not know what degree of credit belongs to the story of Lilavati, whether in fact such a person ever existed, or whether the learned treatises connected with her name were really either written by her or compiled for her use ; but of this I am certain that, if they be not authentic, the compiler of them would never have invented the story which attributes them to her, if at that time the education of women, even in the abstrusest science had seemed a thing incongruous or impossible.

It was reasonable then to hope that you would gladly welcome the proposal to put an end to the barbarous state of degradation of the female sex, which did not characterise the earliest and most flourishing period of Hindu history.

Notwithstanding these reasons for hoping that my design would succeed, I felt that it was an important venture, not to be lightly made ; and that in proportion as the chances seemed to favour success, would be the greatness of the discouragement if the attempt should be openly made and

as openly fail. In seeking to advance the cause of female education in India, or in other words the elevation and improvement of the whole people, one false step, one hasty or ill-considered measure might incalculably injure and retard it. I determined, therefore, that a year at least should elapse, during which I might learn to see my way and strengthen my ground of operations, before I would make any decided step in advance. I landed in April 1848 and in April 1849, I opened my scheme in detail to some of the friends by whom I am now surrounded having first secured the promise of the valuable assistance of the lady who is about to take charge of your children.

It was not without full consideration that I decided on making this attempt, without seeking in the first instance to connect it directly and officially with the Government. Something was lost but much, as it seemed to me, was to be gained by the course I decided on pursuing. I considered it essential to success that the execution of the plan should follow with as little delay as possible on the first public intimation of it, and that there should be no reserves, no hesitation, nothing in short to check the ardour of those who might be ready to embark with me in the cause.

It was impossible to overlook that, before I could hope to establish this as a Government institution in a matter of such deep importance to the welfare of the country, there must be consultations and debates, and, perhaps, even references to the authorities at home. I must have surrendered something of my free power of action, and especially delays would have intervened, which of all things, I most deprecated. I must have been prepared too to show to the Government assured means of success, before they could be asked to sanction the novel measure, and out of all this I foresaw inconveniences and difficulties arising which in my mind more than counterbalanced the obvious advantages of such connection. On the other hand, my position in this country and my official career as head of the Government Schools afford of itself a strong guarantee to my supporters of the respectability of any school which should be established under my personal auspices and held out some hope of its permanence.

I trusted also, and as the result has shown, in a happy hour, to exciting among you some degree of enthusiasm, by announcing that I was willing to take on myself all the responsibilities of establishing and maintaining the school, and that I threw myself confidently on the enlightened natives of Calcutta to appreciate my motives, and assured of their adhesion to my views. I cannot express myself in terms of sufficient thankfulness to you for the noble manner in which you have responded to this appeal.

There was another point which I had to consider well and warily, the consideration of which, however, in some of its bearings was partly connected with those to which I have just alluded. It was of course essential to great and permanent success that all the pupils of my new school should belong to families of respectability; but the question which offered itself to me was, whether should I or should I not seek the support, in the first instance, of those who are generally looked on as the leading men of Hindu

Society. I speak of such men as Rajah Radhakant Deb, Rajah Kalikrishna, Ashutosh Deb, and my colleagues in the management of the Hindu College, Prosunno Coomar Tagore, and Russomoy Dutt. I had reason to believe that several of these gentlemen would not be unfavourable to the proposition of female education, nevertheless, after much and anxious thought, I decided that it would be on the whole most advisable to seek my first pupils from the families of the immediate friends of those with whom I was in habits of more frequent intercourses.

I considered that it would be open to those heads of Hindu Society to express an expectation that any institution which they agreed to sanction should have also the formal sanction of Government and this would have landed me again among those delays from which I was anxious to escape. I reflected also that many who were able to bear the expenses of giving private instruction to the females of their family at home might express a preference for that method of education ; and, if the circumstances of this country were different from what they are, there is much in the arguments which they would probably urge on that score in which I should agree with them ; and it would have cost me much time and argument to point out to them that as a general system of domestic education is and for a long time must be impossible in Bengal, from the mere want of proper instructresses, it is incumbent on those who really wish to serve their country efficiently effectually to sacrifice something of their own wishes, and by their example to encourage and stimulate others in less fortunate circumstances. I thought it likely, too, that these men, feeling the responsibility of their stations, might choose to consult upon the matter with their own friends, and thus my plans would have been canvassed and debated in societies and by bodies to which I had no access, and where I could offer no explanations, and exert no influence. But it is my fixed intention, if it has your approval, as I can scarcely doubt that it will, as soon as we have settled down into something of method and order, to invite these gentlemen to witness what we are doing and to call on them to give an additional impulse to our exertions by their avowed sanction and support. I know the question has been debated among you whether it would not have been a proper compliment to have asked them and others of the same character to be present on this occasion. I trust that some opportunity may be found of explaining to them that this has not been done, not from want of any personal respect, but in accordance with the system on which it was thought best that the experiment should be made.

In the like manner, I have been asked by several of my European friends who have already heard of this design and who are looking toward it with the deepest sympathy, whether they could be allowed to be present this morning I needed but have expressed a wish, and I know that this room could have been crowded with ladies, the leaders of the European Society of Calcutta. But I declined this on similar grounds. I thought that this would have given an official formality which did not properly belong to the inauguration of that which strictly is still only a private institution. The

time may come, and that at no distant period, when all reserve of this kind may be laid aside when the Calcutta Female School, by whatever other and more illustrious name it may then be known, shall take its proud place among the most honoured, as it will assuredly be one of the most useful institutions of the land.

I ought not to conclude without saying one word on the nature of the studies that are to be pursued here. It is well understood by you all that the plan which has been uniformly followed in the Government Schools, of not meddling with the religion of your children, is to be strictly followed here. There are some, I know, who are very apt to sneer at the notion of learned females, and they may form an idea of the sort of education which we propose to give to these girls, which I think it very likely that I should be ready to join with them in ridiculing. But if any of you have done me the honour to attend to the remarks which I have had occasions to make in connexion with the education of the boys of Bengal, you will see how constantly I have dwelt on the importance of sedulously cultivating their mother tongue, that I had told them that we resort to English, chiefly on account of the superiority of its literature, and that we expect of our students that sooner or later they will impart to countrymen in their own language the knowledge which they have gained in ours. Judge then whether their opinions are not likely to be applied by me with ten-fold force to the education of girls, who are not called on to be the instructors of others except in the bosom of their own families. As far as literature therefore is concerned, we shall make Bengali the foundation, and resort to English only for some of those subsidiary advantages, and when we know that the communication of such knowledge is not in opposition to the wishes of the parents. Besides which, there are a thousand feminine works and accomplishments, with their needles, in embroidery and fancy work in drawing, in many other things which I am not half so competent to describe as my friend Mrs. Ridsdale, whose province it will be to teach them. The knowledge of these things will give to your children the means of adorning their own homes, and of supplying themselves with harmless and elegant employment. It was said long ago that "Idleness is the mother of all vice" but there is very little idleness in the world ; and when any one is not engaged in some harmless or useful occupation, it is generally because he is employed about something worse.

It would have been great forgetfulness if I had closed these remarks without mentioning in terms of well merited praise a fact which may be known to some of you, but probably is not so to all, a fact which of itself has acted upon me as an additional stimulus to follow out my own plan. At this moment that I speak to you, a formal plan has been submitted to the Council of Education, with a request that it be laid before Government, by Baboo Joykissen Mookerjee, for the establishment of a Native Female School at Ooterparah, which he proposes to have endowed at the joint expense of himself and of the Government, what may be the result of his application, I cannot now foretell: you see that it involves the same considera-

tions which I had to anticipate in my own case, with the additional circumstance that, if the Government be favourable to the plan, it is probable that they may wish the first experiment made under their sanction to be in Calcutta rather than in an adjoining village ; but I am sure that it reflects great honour on Joykissen, and furnishes one more proof of the spirit which is awake in the land. I observed, too, in the last advices that we have from Madras, that the Advocate General alludes to a female school which has been actually established in that Presidency by two native students of the Government School there. I have written to Madras to learn further particulars, and to ask the names of these youngmen, that I may lose no time in assuring them of my sympathy, and of any assistance in my power to give them.

There remains but one thing more to be mentioned. It was agreed at my house the other night that two Committees should be appointed, one to look out for a proper place for the school house, and the other to examine and decide upon the application of candidates for admission into the school. Only the former of these was appointed, and their duties have been superseded, at least for the present, by the liberal kindness of Baboo Dukhina Runjun Mookerjea who has placed these premises at our disposal. There is a pressing want for the other Committee, and if it meets your approval, I should propose that for the next six months those who were chosen of the House Committee should act temporarily as the Committee of selection. Fresh applicants are constantly coming in, and it is necessary that I should know to whom they are to be referred. The question is no longer doubtful, it is not now that we are to say 'shall we succeed?' We have succeeded: and the banner which we plant this day, with the blessing of God, shall never go backwards, until its supremacy is felt and thankfully acknowledged in every part of the land.

Finally, I take this opportunity of reminding you that I shall request you from time to time to assemble at my house, in order that I may know by direct communication with you, whether the school is conducted to your satisfaction, whether there are any particulars which you wish to have altered and in short, to strengthen still more and more the assurance which I know you have at this moment of my anxious desire that it should be conducted in all respects in such manner as to be satisfactory to you and beneficial to your children.*

II. A NOTE ON THE BETHUNE COLLEGIATE SCHOOL (1922-49)

In the history of the Bethune College, I have briefly referred to the Collegiate School up to the year 1921. The subject has been separately dealt with here up to 1949. The salient points are only referred to.

Since October 1920, the school left its own habitation and was housed in temporary buildings erected on the newly acquired land on the north-western side. The stables were also converted into school rooms later on. But this

* *The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, May 8, 1849.

arrangement was not at all satisfactory. It impaired not only the health of the students, but also hampered further progress of the school. An agitation was started to restore the original building to its real owner, the school. In spite of the Advocate-General's opinion in its favour (which was given so far back as in January 1929) the school was not given possession of the building till May 1940.

But the school could remain here for about two years only. The World War II reached a critical stage in the East in December, 1941. The British Government resolved to utilise all its resources to conduct the war vigorously on the Eastern Front. Early in 1942 the ground and premises of the Bethune School & College were all requisitioned by the Government for the sole use of the A.R.P. The school was closed down on 2nd April, 1942. The services of the teachers were, however, retained. It was reopened under the orders of the D.P.I., in Vidyasagar Bani Bhaban, after a year, on 16th April, 1943, where the college had already been shifted. Due to insufficient accommodation only the top six classes could be held here. The school sat in the morning from 7-15 to 11-15. It was removed to its own building in January, 1946.

The management of the school is vested in the Managing Committee. This Committee was first formed under the New Regulations of the University of Calcutta in 1909. Its first meeting was held on the 17th February, 1909. The Principal of the Bethune College is the *ex-officio* President and the Head Master, or the Head Mistress as the case may be, of the School *ex-officio* Secretary. The administrative control of the school has been all along vested in the Principal of the college with one interval only. In January 1944 this control was transferred to the Inspectress of Schools, Presidency and Burdwan divisions. From June 1945 it was retransferred to the Principal. The Managing Committee of the school on 31st December, 1949 consisted of the following:

1. Mrs. Tatini Das, Principal, *President*
2. Mrs. Suprobha Sen, Headmistress, *Secretary*
3. Mrs. Bani Chatterjee
4. Dr. Mrs. Sarala Ghosh
5. Rai Bahadur Dr. P. K. Chatterjee
6. Professor Sunil Chandra Sen
7. Miss Muktaprova Bose, Asst. Head Mistress.

The teaching staff included efficient and trained scholars. In the former regime some members of the staff took college classes and not a few were promoted to posts of lecturers and professors in the college. Miss Jyotirmoyi Ganguli, a highly reputed teacher and political leader, was for about five years (1911-15) on the staff of the school. Miss Marie Bonnerjee served the school before she joined the college in 1918. Prof. Chintaharan Chakravarty, the erudite scholar, was Head Pandit of the school from 1926 to 1929. Some others again won particular distinction in the teaching line. The Head Mistresses during 1922-49 were Miss Hironmoyee Sen, B.A., B.T.

(1918-37), Miss Niranjan Bairagi, B.A., B.T., (1938-42) and Mrs. Suprobha Sen, B.A., B.T. (1943-49). In the early months of 1938 Miss Usha Biswas, M.A., B.T., served as Head Mistress of the School. The teaching staff on 31st December, 1949 included the following:

1. Mrs. Suprobha Sen, B.A., B.T., Head Mistress
2. Miss Muktaprova Bose, B.A., B. T., Asst. Head Mistress
3. Mrs. Protiva Bhattacharjee, B.A., B.T., Asst. Mistress
4. Mrs. Suprobha Roy, B.A. (Hons. in English) „
5. Mrs. Kamala Neogy, B.A., B.T. „
6. Miss Lilabati Das Gupta, B.A., B.T. „
7. Mrs. Nihar Kona Mitra, M.A., B.T., B.L. „
8. Miss Protiva Das Gupta, B.Sc., B.T. „
9. Mrs. Maya Das Gupta, B.A., B.T. „
10. Mrs. Rani Lahiri, B.A., B.T. „
11. Miss Punya Prova Das Gupta, B.A., B.T. „
12. Mrs. Renu Kona Manna, B.A., B.T. „
13. Miss Gouri Guha, B.A. „
14. Mrs. Usha Das Gupta, B.A., Physical Instructress
15. Miss Priya Bhasini Roy
16. Sri Jyotish Chandra Goswami, Drawing Master
17. Mrs. Ashalata Devi, Junior Vernacular Teacher
18. Miss Ashalata Halder, Junior Vernacular Teacher

The numerical strength of the school has been gradually on the increase. There were 155 students on the roll in 1918. During the quinquennia since 1922 the number stood as follows: 1922—228 ; 1927—326 ; 1932—336 ; 1937—378 ; 1942—252 ; 1947—322.

The number of students on the roll of the school reached its highest level in 1938, being 405. The War played havoc with the school. The school re-opened on 16th April, 1943 with only 75 girls. On 31st December, 1949 the number stood at 297.

As regards the curriculum, it was keenly felt that the course of studies pursued in the school fell far short of the needs of women. During the quinquennium 1922-23 to 1926-27 cooking was introduced into the curriculum of the school. Needle-work, drawing and music were also added to it. The Matriculation examination under the new syllabus came off for the first time in 1940. Elementary Hygiene, Elementary Science, Drawing and Music, included in the new syllabus, were introduced in the school in 1941. The school also sent up students for Domestic Science and Domestic Hygiene as an alternative to Algebra and Geometry in the compulsory Mathematics paper.

Physical education forms a part of the curriculum. Hygiene was taught to the students in all the classes up to the 3rd class since 1921-22. Dr. (Mrs.) Rushforth delivered twelve lectures on the subject during the year. Miss Hussy made a similar number of lectures on First Aid, Hygiene and Home Nursing in 1922-23. Medical inspection of the girls held in 1923-24 revealed that a large number of pupils suffered from defective eyesight and affection

of throat and tonsils. More attention on the physical education of the girls required to be paid, and in 1928-29 a drill shed was constructed and soon brought into use. Since 1929 instruction in Drill and other physical exercises have been regularly imparted to the girls of both the school and college by the Physical Instructresses.

The Bethune Collegiate School, too, maintained its reputation in the matter of the University examination. The following table shows how the students from the school fared in the Matriculation examination since 1922:

Year	No. of candidates	Success in examination:			The number of girls who secured scholarships
		No. of successful candidates	I	II	III
1921-22	8	8	...	...	...
1922-23	9	7	2	...	5
1923-24	12	12	...	...	3
1924-25	10	6	3	I	...
1925-26	8	4	2	...	3
1926-27	17	12	5	...	I
1927-28	14	5	7	2	2
1928-29	15	11	2	...	3
1929-30	18	14	3	...	2
1930-31	21	14	6	I	2
1931-32	22	11	8	2	I
1932-33	18	14	4	...	I
1933-34	17	11	4	2	I
1934-35	32	13	9	I	3
1935-36	40	19	13	2	...
1936-37	30	17	9	...	I
1937-38	49	20	15	5	2
1938-39	34	18	11	3	...
1939-40	42	12	14	13	5
1940-41	17	5	3	8	4
1941-42	32	6	18	8	3
1942-43		(The school was closed down)			
1943-44	9	5	2	2	
1944-45	15	4	8	3	
1945-46	19	3	7	8	
1946-47	26	5	13	8	
1947-48	27	9	10	8	
1948-49	29	5	8	13+3	(compartmental)

Under the new Matriculation syllabus the standard of divisions was raised. Hence the lower figures are there in the first division. Among the recipients of scholarships special mention should be made of Ava Sen, Prativa Neogi and Manjari Das Gupta. These three stood first respectively in 1923, 1931 and 1935 amongst the successful female candidates, each securing a scholarship of Rs. 20/- per month.

Scholarship and Prizes.—The School awards scholarships and prizes to the meritorious students on their success in class and University examinations. The Vidyasagar Scholarship is awarded to the student who stands first in the annual examination of class VIII. She is given the amount in two equal instalments of Rs. 26/-, one in class IX and the other in class X. The Kanaklata Dasi Stipend of Rs. 2/- per month is given to the needy and deserving pupil amongst those who get promoted from class VII to class VIII. The Hemlata Devi Memorial Prize is awarded to the successful candidate who secures the highest marks in Bengali in the Matriculation examination amongst those sent up by the school. To the meritorious students of different classes the following prizes are given on the results of their annual examinations:

1. Prize for Bengali in memory of the late Miss Hironmoyee Sen.
2. Prize for Bengali in memory of the late Miss Hironmoyee Sen.
3. Prize for Bengali in memory of the late Miss Hironmoyee Sen.
4. A cup awarded by Mrs. Tatini Das, *Principal*, Bethune College, in memory of her revered father, the late Shyama Charan Gupta, for Senior School.
5. A cup awarded by Mrs. Tatini Das, *Principal*, Bethune College, in memory of her revered father, the late Shyama Charan Gupta, for Senior School.
6. A cup for Senior classes, awarded by the late Miss Hironmoyee Sen, in memory of her revered father, the late Dwaraka Nath Sen.
7. A cup for Junior classes, awarded by the late Miss Hironmoyee Sen, in memory of her revered father, the late Dwaraka Nath Sen.
8. A silver cup awarded by Mrs. Stapleton for Physical Exercise.

Outside the school hours, the pupils engaged themselves at times in extra-academic activities. Some of these deserve mention. Girls prepared exhibits for the Bengal Education Week, 1936, and served as volunteers. The following remarks on the exhibits are worth quoting:

“About 31 exhibits were received from this institution, of which there were 10 illustrations in Geography. Amongst these ‘The Climatic Regions of the World,’ ‘Animals and Products of Africa and Australia’ and ‘Some Places of Worship in India’ showed neat work. There were some pictures on Natural History, and of these, ‘The Life History of a Fish’ and ‘Reptiles’ were interesting. There were many specimens of needle-work from classes III to IX; of these some of the work of the girls from classes VIII, VI and V were really good productions.”

Students of the school received a prize in the Art Exhibition held at the University Institute in 1940. They even won laurels in exhibitions outside Calcutta, notably in one at Faridpur in early 1938, for the nice pictures they drew and presented there. They also competed successfully in the Annual Essay competition on the League of Nations. Three prizes of the value of Rs. 20/-, Rs. 15/- and Rs. 10/- used to be awarded. In 1934, Maya Ghosh secured the 2nd prize. In 1936, Namita Ghose, Pratiba Dutt and Kanak Banerjee were awarded all the three prizes respectively for the best three

essays on the subject. In the year following, Basana Basak obtained the 3rd prize.

Much attention has been paid to the development of corporate life of the students. A special class was held to train the girls on Girl Guide lines so early as in 1917-18. A company of Girl Guides was started in 1923. The pupils benefited by their activities in connection with Guide Rallies. They also joined the Red Cross Associations in 1934 ; 58 joining it this session. The number rose to 69 in 1936. The Girl Guide Company started in 1923 did not continue for long. I find a Girl Guide Company started afresh during 1938-39 with two members of the staff as Captain and Lieutenant. It was run enthusiastically until the school closed down in April, 1942. Girls regularly took part in games and tournaments arranged by the Y.W.C.A. and the Ananda Mela, besides the inter-class sports. During the war most of the extra-academic activities of the school were either stopped or curtailed. Since its termination, some again have been revived.

A word should be said about the *Bethune Collegiate School Magazine*. At its Second Ordinary Meeting held on 16th August 1934 the Managing Committee of the school passed the following resolution :

"The Managing Committee empowers the Head Mistress of the school from the current year to levy from class X to class III, an annual fee equivalent to one month's tuition fee, for starting a fund to be called the Magazine and Common Fund. This fund is to be kept separate from the Government contributions for the Common Room fund and Savings Bank account should be opened by the Head Mistress of the school."

The first issue of the *Bethune Collegiate School Magazine* came out in December 1934. A strong Magazine Committee was formed with Miss Hironmoyee Sen, B.A., B.T., Head Mistress, as President. The *Magazine's* motto was कन्यायेबं पालनीया शिक्षणीयातियन्ततः (even daughters should be brought up and trained with care). For the first three years it was published annually. Since 1937, the *Magazine* became bi-annual. The *Magazine* served to build up the corporate life of the students. Like the *Bethune College Magazine* this also could not be brought out during the War. The *Magazine* has not yet been revived.

III. THE BETHUNE SCHOOL COMMITTEE, 1856-1908

The Committee of Management both for the school and the college was generally known by the above name up till 1908. Since then the management was split up, the college having the Governing Body and the school the Managing Committee. Names of the Members of the Governing Body are given separately. Names of some members of the School Committee might have been omitted. The period of membership of each and everyone of the members cannot be ascertained from the records available.

Banerjee, Kalicharan 1904-08

Beadon, Sir Cecil, *President*, 1856-62

Bonnerjee, W. C. 1873-
 Bose, Ananda Mohan 1878-
 Choudhury, Roy Prannath 1856-
 Das, Durgamohan 1878-
 Dutt, Bhawaniprasad 1856-
 Dutt, Rajendra 1856-68
 Dutt, Umesh Chandra -1907
 Garth, Sir Richard, *President*, 1876-86
 Ghosal, Janaki Nath, *Secretary*, 1896-1903
 Ghose, Harachandra 1856-68
 Ghose, Kasiprasad 1856-1868
 Ghose, M., *Secretary*, 1873-96
 Harendra Krishna, Raja 1874-
 Kali Krishna Bahadur, Raja 1856-68, 1874
 Mackenzie, Mr. 1876
 Maclean, Sir Francis, *President*, 1896-1908
 Mitra, Anritalal 1856
 Mitra, Sarada Charan, M.A., B.L., *Secretary*, 1903-08
 Petharum, Sir William Corum, *President*, 1886-96
 Phear, J. B., *President*, 1873-76
 Reynolds, Mr. 1876-
 Roy, Ramaprasad 1856-62
 Roy, Ramratna 1856-59
 Seton-Karr, W. S., *President*, -1868
 Sinha, Raja Pratapchandra 1856-68
 Sircar, Dr. Nilratan 1904-08
 Sircar, Peary Churn 1873-75
 Sorabji, Miss Cornelia, Bar-at-Law, 1907-8
 Vidyasagar, Pandit Iswar Chandra, *Secretary*, 1856-68

IV. THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE BETHUNE COLLEGE, 1908-49

Banerjee, S. K. 1942-44
 Basu, Miss Hemaprabha 1915-17
 Bhattacharyya, Krishna Chandra 1916-17, 1928
 Bonnerjee, Miss Mrinalini 1940-41, *married name*,
 Emerson, Mrs. Mrinalini 1948-49
 Bose, Lady Abala 1919-48
 Bose, Chunilal 1924-30
 Bose, Mrs. Sachindranath 1924-25
 Bose, Miss Stela 1937-39
 Chakrabarty, Narendra Nath 1926-30
 Chaudhury, Mrs. A. N. 1930-35
 Choudhury, Benoy Kumar 1940-41
 Choudhury, Dr. J. K. Ph.D. 1945-46
 De, Mrs. K. C. 1932-48

- Directors of Public of Instruction, *Ex-officio President*, 1908-41
 Dutt, Mrs. Sarojini 1936
 Ghose, Miss Lotika 1944-46, 1947-48
 Ghose, Dr. Edith 1930-32
 Ghose, Justice B. B. 1930-35
 Gupta, Asoka 1948-49
 Gupta, Karunakana 1948-49
 Inspectress of Schools, Presidency and Burdwan Divisions, *ex-officio*, 1948
 Khanam, Begum Farhat Banu 1945-47
 Knott, Miss E. G., 1939-48
 Lewis, Sally 1948-49
 Mallik, S. N. 1924-26
 Mazumdar, Mrs. P. K., 1918-21
 Mitter, Lady B. L. 1936-38
 Mohalanabis, Subodh Chandra 1915-48
 Momin, Begum Hamida 1935-49
 Mukherjee, Sir Asutosh 1912-14
 Mukherjee, Bejoy Gopal 1912-13
 Mukherjee, Justice Bijon Kumar, M.A., D.L., *President*, 1943-48
 Mukherjee, Sir Manmathnath 1939-44, *President*, 1942
 Mukherjee, Mrs. S. C. 1939-48
 Moorshed, Mrs. Hashina 1939-48
 Paul, Dr. Radha Binode, M.A., D.L., *President*, 1948-49
 Principals of the College, Lady, *Ex-officio Secretary*, 1908-49
 Principal, Loreto House, Calcutta, *Ex-officio*, 1948-49
 Ray, Debendra Nath 1919-38
 Ray, Mrs. K. N. 1924-34
 Ray, Sir P. C. 1924-28
 Ray, Dr. P. K. 1913
 Ray, Mrs. P. K. 1926-47
 Revett, Miss 1935-38
 Roy, Kanaklata 1948-49
 Roy, Mrs. S. N. 1934-35
 Roy, Renuka 1948-49
 Sarvadhikari, Sir Devaprasad 1915-28
 Sen, Binayendra Nath 1912
 Sen, Pares Nath 1912-13, 1948
 Sen, Miss Kalyani 1946-47
 Sen, Amiya Kumar 1948-49
 Sen, Swarnaprava 1948-49
 Stapleton, Dr. Miss 1928-30
 Stewart, Mrs. A. D. 1932-33
 Wheeler, Lady 1919-21
 Woodroff, Lady 1918
 Zoha, Mrs. F. 1942-44, 1946-48

V. INSTRUCTING STAFF, 1849-1949

Names of some Head Mistresses and Lady Superintendents (later, designated 'Principal') only, are available from 1849 to 1878. From 1879 to 1889 those of the Mistresses and Lady Superintendents mentioned in the *Reports* of the D.P.I.'s and other contemporary journals are inserted here. From 1889 onwards names of the Head Mistresses and those Mistresses of the School, later promoted to the posts of Lecturers and Professors, are given here along with the regular teachers of the Bethune College. Names of the teachers of the School, other than those referred to above, could not be ascertained from the records still extant. For several years we find one Head Master and One Head Mistress concurrently. Those of the later period, except the Head Mistresses, have been left out due to want of space. The Instructing Staff here mainly include those of the Bethune College. It is to be regretted that the list of the Instructing Staff during the last one hundred years cannot be completed at present

Bairagi, B.A., B.T., Niranjana, *Head Mistress*, 1938-43

Banerjee, M.Sc., Ajit Kumar (Bot. & Bio.) 1949

Banerjee, M.A. (Cal.), M.Ed. (Oxon.), Miss Amiya (Eng.) 1936-37

Banerjee, B.A., Rasiklal, *Head Master*, 1894-99

Banerjee, M.Sc., Sabyasachi (Bot. & Bio.) 1949

Banerjee, M.Sc., Santosh Kumar (Chem.) 1922-45

Banerjee, M.A., Suresh Chandra (Sans.) 1949

Batra, M.A., Mrs. Shanti (Bot. & Bio.) 1948-49

Bhadury, M.Sc., Satinath (Bot. & Bio.) 1942-49

Bhar, Santosh Kumar (Math.) 1937

Bhattacharyya, Aditya Kumar (Sans. & Beng.) 1926-29

Bhattacharyya, M.A., Dinesh Chandra (Sans. & Beng.) 1921-22

Bhattacharyya, M.Sc., Gopinath (Log. & Phil.) 1929-39

Bhattacharyya, M.A., Krishna Chandra (Log. & Phil.) 1914-28

Bhattacharyya, M.A., Panchanan (Math.) 1922-29

Bhattacharyya, M.Sc., Sunil Kumar (Bot. & Bio.) 1949

Bhattacharyya, M.A., Umesh Chandra (Phil.) 1930-31

Bhattacharyya, Vireswar (Econ.) 1917

Banerjee, M.A., Miss Anila (Civ. & Econ.) 1941-42, M.Sc. (Lond.) 1943-44.

Banerjee, M.A., B.L., Miss Mrinalini, *married name* Emerson, Mrs.

Mrinalini (Eng.) 1935-45, *Vice-Principal* 1948-49

Banerjee, M.A., Miss Marie (Hist.) 1918-31

Bose, M.Sc., Mrs. Chameli (Phys.) 1938-49

Bose, M.A., Miss Chandramukhi, 1884-86, *Lady Superintendent*, later designated *Principal* 1886-1901

Bose, B.Sc. (Hons. Lond.), Miss Dipti (Phys.) 1944-48

Bose, M.A.* Miss Hemprabha, *2nd Mistress* 1893-1902, *Head Mistress & Lecturer* (Bot.) 1903-14, *Lecturer* (Bot.) 1914-19

Bose, M.A., Miss Stella (Eng.) 1922-39

* Passed M.A. in 1898.

- Bose, M.A., Sasibhusan, *Lecturer*, 1902
 Brietzche, Mrs. 1869-1871
 Chakrabarty, M.A., Kavyatirtha, Chintaharan (Sans. & Beng.) 1926-40
 Chakrabarty, M.A., Miss Nalini (Log. & Phil.) 1939-44
 Chakrabarty, M.A., Narendra Nath (Eng.) 1922-1930
 Chakrabarty, M.A., Sarat Chandra (Sans.) 1902-09
 Chatterjee, B.A., Aditya Kumar, *Lecturer* 1889-1903
 Chatterjee, M.A., Mrs. Amiya (Civ. & Econ.) 1947-49
 Chatterjee, M.Sc., Benoy Krishna (Chem.) 1948-49
 Chatterjee, Charusasi (Log. & Phil.) 1927-31
 Chatterjee, Durgacharan (Sans. & Beng.) 1933-40
 Chatterjee, M.A., Miss Ishita (Eng.) 1946-48, 1949
 Chatterjee, M.A., Kumud Bandhab (Sans. & Beng.) 1918-25
 Chatterjee, M.Sc., Rabindra Nath (Civ. & Econ.) 1944-46
 Choudhury, M.A. Benoy Kumar (Hist. & Econ.) 1918-32, 1934-37
 Choudhury, Ph.D., Jitendrakumar (Bot.) 1941-49
 Choudhury, M.A., Mrs. Nilima (Log. & Phil.) 1949
 Das, M.A., Miss Anjali (Log. & Phil.) 1935-39, *married name*, Mukherjee, Mrs. Anjali, 1940-41
 Das, B.A., Kaliprasanna, *Head Master* 1889-93, *Lecturer* (Math.) 1894-1909, *Head Master* 1909-11
 Das, Mrs. Rajkumari, *Principal*, June 1928-33
 Das, M.A., Ph.D., S. K. (Phil. *Hony.*) 1935-36
 Das, M.A., Miss Smriti (Sans. & Beng.) 1941-42
 Das, M.A., Sudhendu Kumar (Sans. & Beng.) 1930-32
 Das, M.A., Mrs. Tatini, *Professor* (Log. & Phil.) 2nd July, 1932-33, *Principal* 1934-49
 Das Gupta, M.Sc., Miss Pratima (Phys.) 1943-44, 1947-48
 Das Gupta, Mrs. Pratiba, (Chem.) 1948-49
 Das Gupta, Mrs. Usha (Physical Inst.) 1948-49
 De, M.A., Hem Chandra (Log. & Phil.) 1903-14
 De, Kshemesh Chandra (Econ.) 1931-34
 De, Miss Maya (Physical Inst.) 1937-47
 Debi, M.Sc., Anima (Chem.) 1949
 Dutt, M.A., Bisweswar (Log. & Phil.) 1926
 Dutt, M.Sc., Miss Chameli (Phys.) 1938-40, *married name*, Bose, Mrs. Chameli, 1941-42
 Dutt, M.A., Miss Kiron (Log. & Phil.) 1949
 Dutt, M.A. (Cal.), M.Sc. (Manch.), Mrs. Sarojini (Bot.) 1920-30, (*study leave*—1931-32), 1933-38
 Dutta, M.A., Sashibhusan, 1879-85
 Ghose, M.A., Miss Bani (Eng.) 1945-46
 Ghose, M.A., Mrs. Binapani (Hist.) 1948-49
 Ghose, M.A., Miss Juthica (Sans.) 1949
 Ghose, B.Litt. (*Oxon*), Dip. Ed. (*Oxford*) Miss Lotika, (Eng.) 1939-49
 Ghose, M.Sc., Miss Nilima (Phys.) 1945-49

- Ghose, M.A., Miss Ramala (Eng.) 1949
 Ghose, B.A., Miss Surabala, *2nd Mistress*, 1893, *1st Mistress* (Acting) 1894-97, *Head Mistress* (Offg.) 1897-1900, *Head Mistress* 1901-2, *Lecturer* (Hist. & Beng.) 1903-12, *Principal* (Offg.) 1913-14, *Principal* 1915-16
 Gupta, M.A., Amritlal (Hist.) 1932-36
 Gupta, M.A., Miss Karunakana (Hist.) 1938-48, 1949
 Gupta, B.A., Shyamacharan, 1904-09
 Gupta, Sisirendu (Math.) 1937
 Heming, Miss, *Lady Superintendent*, 1872-1875
 Janau, B.Sc. (Lond.), Miss Anne Louise, *Principal* 1916-18
 Kar, M.Sc., Amiya Bhusan (Zool.) 1942, (Bot. & Bio.) 1943-48
 Khanum, B.A., Miss Sayeda (Urdu) 1939-41
 Khastagir, B.A., Miss Kumudini, *2nd Mistress*, 1891-93, *1st Mistress* 1894, *3rd Lecturer* 1895-97, *married name*, Das, Mrs. Kumudini, *Lecturer* 1898-1900, *Principal* (Offg.) 1901-02, *Principal* 1903-13
 Khosta, M.A., Miss Santi (Bot. & Bio.) 1945-47
 Lahiri, M.A., Prakash Chandra (Sans.) 1948-49
 Lahiri, Miss Radharani, *Mistress* 1880-86, *Head Mistress* 1886-93
 Latif, A. M. Mahammad (Persian) 1896-97
 Lepscombe, Miss F. A., *Lady Superintendent* 1882-86
 Lews, M.A., Mrs. Sally 1945-47, 1948-49
 Lodh, M.A., Abanimohan (Log. & Phil.) 1932
 Mahalanobis, Miss Sarala 1886
 Majumdar, Miss Bidhan Nandini (Physical Inst.) 1935-36
 Majumdar, M.A., Nirmal Kanti (Civ. & Econ.) 1934-43
 Majumdar, M.A., Ramapada (Eng.) 1932-36
 Maitra, M.A., Mihir Kumar (Hist.) 1931-32
 Mayer, M.Sc., Miss Sally (Bot.) 1939-45, 1947-48
 Mitra, M.A., Miss Dipti (Eng.) 1944-49
 Mitra, B.A., Mrs. Saralabala, *2nd Mistress* 1901-06, *study leave*, Sept. 1906-Aug. 1908. Joined the College in Sept., 1908 as Lecturer, but was subsequently transferred
 Moses, M.A., Miss Dorothy (Eng.) 1938-41
 Mukherjee, M.A., Adityanath, Lecturer, 1901-03
 Mukherjee, M.Sc., Amal Krishna (Bot. & Bio.) 1945-47, 1949
 Mukherjee, M.A., Mrs. Bharati (Sans. & Beng.) 1941-42, (Beng.) Sept. 1943-47
 Mukherjee, M.A., Bijoy Gopal, (Eng.) 1904-21
 Mukherjee, M.Sc., Miss Debi (Chem.) 1944-45, 1947-49
 Mukherjee, M.A., Subimal (Civ. & Econ.) 1946-47
 Mukherjee, Dr. Syamadas (Math.) 1903-04
 Nag, M.Sc., Sailendraprasad (Bot.) 1931-41
 Paul, M.Sc., Niranjana (Bot. & Bio.) 1949
 Peterson, Miss Margaret (Physical Inst.) 1930-31
 Pigott, Miss., *Head Mistress* ?-1868
 Ray, M.A., Debendra Nath (Sans.) 1912-June 1921, July 1922-38
 Rahman, M.A., M.Litt., Miss S. (Hist.) 1949

- Rickets, Miss Mary (Physical Inst.) 1931-34
 Riddsdale, Miss 1849-?
 Roy, M.A., Miss Bani (Hist.) 1948-49
 Roy, M.A., Lalit Kumar (Math.) 1939-41
 Roy, M.A., Miss Lila (Beng.) 1948-49
 Roy, M.A., Miss Provabati (Eng.) 1934-35
 Rudra, M.Sc., Manindranath (Phys.) 1927-38
 Sarkar, M.A., Akshoy Kumar (Hist.) 1909-16
 Sarkar, M.A., Kalihar (Log. & Phil.) 1922-27
 Sarkar, Pramatha Nath (Civ. & Econ.) 1936
 Sarkar, Sushobhan (Hist. *Hony.*) 1933-34
 Sen, M.A., Miss Arundhati (Log. & Phil.) 1942-48
 Sen, M.A., Miss Bina (Math.) 1948-49
 Sen, M.A., B.T., Miss Hiranmoyee, *Head Mistress* 1917-28
 Sen, M.A., Miss Kalyani (Civ. & Econ.) 1944-49
 Sen, B.A., Miss Kamini, *2nd Mistress* 1886-90, *3rd Lecturer* 1891-94
 Sen, M.A., Miss Labanyalata 1941-49
 Sen, M.A., Mrs. Malati (Sans. & Beng.) 1941-42, (Beng.) 1943-49
 Sen, M.A., Miss Mrinmoyee (Bot.) 1922-33
 Sen, B.A., Pareshnath (Eng.) 1889-1921
 Sen, Sadhana (Civ. & Econ.) 1937
 Sen, M.A., Miss Shanta (Sans. & Beng.) 1939-42, (Sans.) 1943-48
 Sen, B.A., B.T., Mrs. Suprabha, *Head Mistress*, 1943-49
 Sen Gupta, M.A., Prabodh Chandra (Math.) 1916-34
 Sinha, B.A., Miss Surabala, *Head Mistress* (Offg.) 1913-17
 Tarkalankar, Pandit Chandra Mohan (Sans.) 1889-1901
 Tarkalankar, Pandit Madan Mohan, (Teacher *Hony.*) 1849-50
 Thakur, Amarendra Sundar (Eng.) 1934 (*for 2 months only*)
 Tompkins, Mrs., *Lady Superintendent* 1875-81 (?)
 Tripathi, Mrs. Dipti (Beng.) 1948-49
 Webber, Miss Doris, (Physical Inst.) 1920-30
 Wright, Miss G. M., *Principal* 1918-28
 Zoha, M.A., Mrs. Fazilalunnessa (Math.) 1934-38, *Vice-Principal* 1939-48.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The history of the Bethune Vidyalaya is, practically speaking, the history of women's education movement during a century and a half. The European missionaries and the European ladies who came to India were the first to found schools for her girls. But these could not attain success for reasons narrated briefly in the introductory chapters. Those who wish to acquaint themselves with these pioneer efforts of the foreigners in some detail, will do well to consult my book, *The Beginnings of Modern Education in Bengal : Women's Education*. The earlier endeavours of the Bengalis in this direction and the circumstances leading to the opening of the Calcutta Female School by J. E. D. Bethune, have been also narrated in this book.

The news of the actual foundation of the Bethune School was broadcast through the papers, both Bengali and English. It should be noted that *Sambad Prabhakar* and *Sambad Bhaskar*, the two prominent Bengali newspapers of the day, fervently supported this noble cause and published the news of the foundation of the Bethune School with editorial comments for days together. *The Bengal Hurkaru* and *the India Gazette* published in full the speech of Mr. Bethune at the opening of the school and the proceedings of the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of its buildings on the western side of the Cornwallis Square. This piece of Government land was given in exchange for that possessed by J. E. D. Bethune and Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee in Mirzapur, then considered outskirts of the city. *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, (1840-1859), by J. A. Richey contain some valuable information regarding the early years of the school. *The Hindu Intelligencer* of Kasiprasad Ghose also served the cause of the school during this period.

The career of Bethune's school under the Secretaryship of Pandit Ishwar-chandra Vidyasagar is an interesting study. Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji, in his paper on "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar as a Promoter of Female Education in Bengal" in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1927. No. 3, narrated in its concluding portion this part of the story, having based it on unpublished State Records. This portion of his article has been of great help to me in tracing Vidyasagar's connection with this infant institution. Needless to add, I have drawn largely on Mr. Banerji's paper.

Reports of the respective Directors of Public Instruction, Bengal, and latterly the *Quinquennial Reviews on Progress of Education* published under the auspices of the Education Department, Government of Bengal, contain invaluable materials, and those intending to write the history of our Progress in Education in Bengal, and for the earlier period of that in Eastern India, can ill-afford to do without them. Similarly, for the history of educational institutions in Bengal, these *Reports* and *Reviews* are indispensable. For the climatic condition of the country and other causes manuscript records can seldom be preserved. The usefulness of printed reports is, therefore, all the more keenly felt. These *Reports* from 1860-1942, *Quinquennial Reviews* from 1892-93 to 1896-97 upto the latest *Reviews* published, have helped me immensely in preparing the story of this Institution.

In this connection the services of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* should be specially mentioned. This monthly was started by Umesh Chandra Dutt, the life-long worker in women's cause, in August 1863 under the auspices of the Bamabodhini Sabha with the special object of women's all-round improvement. The journal continued to discharge its self-ordained services till 1922. During these sixty years of its existence the *Patrika* laid special stress on female education and progress of the Bethune School and College was followed closely by the journal. Needless to add, I have had to consult most of the files of this journal. These have supplied me with enough material for reconstructing the history of the institution. *Paricharika*, a

women's journal of the Nababidhan Brahmos, was not a very warm supporter of the kind of higher education, the Bethune School and College imparted to its alumni. Still it has served my purposes in an indirect way.

The *Calendars* and *Minutes* of the Calcutta University are also indispensable in writing a connected account of our educational institutions. For the progress of women's education in Bengal their usefulness is all the greater. These, therefore, have often been consulted by me. Due to the exigencies of World War II, the old records of the Bethune Vidyalaya were either lost or misplaced. However, I have been able to consult the papers dealing with the affairs of the institution during the later years. It should be noted here that *The Bethune College Magazine* which is a very well-edited College Magazine, supplied me with material about the academic and extra-academic activities of the college during the eventful years between 1931 and 1940. There are some books, too, which I have used largely. *Iswarchandra Vidya-sagar* by Subodh Chandra Mitra is one of them. Particular mention, however, should be made of *Bharater Nari-Jagaran* by Prabhat Chandra Gangopadhyaya. This book, together with the *Bramo Year Books* edited by Sophia Dobson Collet, London, for 1878 and 1879, has supplied me with material for the period of amalgamation of the Bethune School with the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya. Newspapers of the time, especially *Sambad Prabhakar*, published the story of the amalgamation in some detail and I have largely drawn on them.

My acknowledgements are due to the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, the National Library (erstwhile "Imperial Library"), the Shadharan Brahmo Samaj Library and the Calcutta University for giving me special facilities to consult the necessary books and papers. The offices of the School and the College have also laid me under debt for supplying me with some records for consultation. In this connection I should acknowledge the help rendered to me by Sj. Sukumar Dutt, the eldest son of Umesh Chandra Dutt, Professor Chintaharan Chakravarty and Professor Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya by lending me valuable journals, papers as well as reports for my use. Principal Mrs. Tatini Das and Prof. Chintaharan Chakravarty, now at Krishnagar College, also helped me with valuable suggestions. I am specially grateful to Sj. Amal Home for helping me with departmental and other papers. Sjs. Nani Gopal Chakravarty, Nagendranath Chakravarty, Chittaranjan Banerjee and Bhupendra Nath Guha were all helpful to me. Without their prompt assistance, it would not have been possible for me to compile this account in so short a time. Last but not the least, I must acknowledge my debt to the Bethune Vidyalaya Centenary Celebrations Publication Committee and especially its President Dr. Kalidas Nag, who is also the General Editor of this volume, for the arrangements they have made for the publication of this narrative. Professor Miss Lotika Ghose, the Convener, has helped me to revise the MSS. and correct the proofs. There might be some omissions in it, for which I crave the indulgence of my readers.

Part II
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS
1820–1950

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS FOR WOMEN AND BY WOMEN

1820—1950

LOTIKA GHOSE

Whatever may be the boast of Indians about the glorious position of women in ancient India, specially what is popularly known as the Vedic and Epic ages, the rights of Indian women were gradually curtailed and at the beginning of the 19th century we find that the right of a woman to outlive her husband and therefore her right to live at all questioned. The inhuman practice of *suttee* that shocked the civilised world was lauded as a highly religious act by the Hindus. Undoubtedly there were social and historical reasons for the degradation of the position of Hindu women and we cannot fairly put it down to the whims of masculine legislators only. But as every student of social history is aware, measures adopted for temporary necessity are often prolonged due to the self-interest of those who benefit from these measures, and in time they become degrading superstitions. As a case in point we may cite untouchability which doubtless rose from the fear of the superior Aryan civilization of being contaminated by the customs and manners of the Adibashis or original inhabitants of the lands the Aryans conquered. But in time untouchability became a cruel and degrading superstition due to the interests of the "twice-born castes" in having a class of helots who could be held in perpetual subjugation.

In the present article I shall confine myself to social and educational movements for women and by women from the beginning of the 19th century to this day, and even so I shall for shortness of space merely indicate the main movements as it will not be possible to recount all the movements or deal exhaustively with them.

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS FOR WOMEN

We have already pointed out that the social position of women at the beginning of the 19th century was exceedingly low. Women had no independent existence apart from their husbands or sons. The practice of early marriage which was given dignity by being

entitled Gauri-Dan,¹ meant that a girl was married before attaining puberty, (in actual practice girls were married between the ages of five and ten). This precluded any attempt at the education of girls, for once a girl was married she went behind the veil and her movements were entirely restricted. Education naturally encourages independence of spirit and the dependent position of women in Hindu society demanded that a woman for her own happiness, if not for the family peace, should be submissive, having no will of her own apart from her male guardian whether father, husband or son. To discourage whatever wish a woman might have for education, the notion was carefully nursed that if a woman was educated, she would surely become a widow. That this notion had a considerable effect in hampering women's education can be seen from the fact that in the first treatise on the education of women, *Strisikshavidhayaka*, the author Sree Gourmohan Vidyalankar has to counter this superstition.²

The first challenge to orthodoxy for degrading the position of Indian women was thrown by Raja Rammohun Roy in his small pamphlet *Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females* in 1822. This pamphlet may well be taken as a charter of rights by Indian women. The introductory remarks show the purpose for which the pamphlet was written. "With a view to enable the public to gain an idea of the civilization throughout the greater part of the empire of Hindustan in ancient days and of the subsequent gradual degradation introduced into the social and political constitution by arbitrary authorities I am induced to give as an instance the interest and care which our ancient legislators took in the promotion of the comfort of the female part of the community, and to compare the laws of female inheritance they enacted and which offered the sex the opportunity of enjoyment of life with that which the moderns and our contemporaries have gradually introduced and

¹ In the Visheswara and other Tantras girls are classified according to age from 1-16. A girl of eight is called Gauri.

² *Question.* Good. But may I ask one question. From your words I have understood that education is necessary indeed. But we are told that if a woman is educated, she becomes a widow. Is this true?

Answer. No sister, that is merely a saying (without any truth). I have heard from my teacher that in no scripture it is written that if a woman is educated, she becomes a widow. Only ignorant women have invented this saying that made a mountain of a mole-hill. If there was any truth in the saying then how is it that we hear of the learning of so many women in the Puranas? Besides, the wives and daughters of rich people are all educated or so I have heard. In recent times you can see that Englishwomen receive the same education as Englishmen. Why do they not become widows? (Free translation from *Strisikshavidhayaka* by Gourmohan Vidyalankar).

established to the complete privation, directly or indirectly, of most of those objects which render life agreeable.”

Tattwabodhini Sabha and Tattwabodhini Patrika. With the starting of the Tattwabodhini Sabha by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore on the 6th October, 1839 a new era in social reform was entered. The powerful writings in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* by great thinkers and writers initiated a widespread movement all over Bengal, specially among the young men who were coming under the influence of English education. Many of the students of Derozio joined the organisation. Among these may be mentioned Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and Ramgopal Ghose (both connected with the starting of the Bethune School), Tarachand Chakrabarty, Radhanath Sikdar, Chandrashekhar Deb, Harachandra Ghose, Ramtanu Lahiri and the large-hearted Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Pearychand and Kishorychand Mitra, Ramgopal Ghose, Ramtanu Lahiri and Akshoy Kumar Dutt were veteran workers in the cause of female education. Akshoy Kumar's strong advocacy of women's rights inspired the next generation of workers in the cause of women's emancipation. In 1852 was published in book form Akshoy Kumar's "*Manaber Sahit Bahya Bastur Sambandha Bichar*" or *Man's Relation With His Environment*, advocating among other things, intercaste marriage, widow remarriage, education of women, the elimination of polygamy, child-marriage and the dowry-system. The book created a great flutter in the dovecots of orthodoxy.

Samajonnati Bidhayini Suhrid Samiti. As the Tattwabodhini Sabha was mainly meant for initiating a new religious and spiritual movement, it was thought better to have another organisation meant wholly for the purpose of social reform, and the above association, entirely devoted to social reform, was started on the 16th December 1854. The first meeting was held in the house of Kisorychand Mitra. The aim was an all-round social uplift. Its four-planked programme of social uplift included (1) Abolition of Caste, (2) Abolition of Polygamy, (3) Abolition of Child Marriage, (4) Widow Remarriage. The society also decided to make the spread of female education its main concern. The following resolutions were passed at the first meeting presided over by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore:

1 Moved by Harish Chandra Mukherjee and seconded by Jadav Chandra Mitra.

"That the members of this association will not by their teaching, work or ideas support whatever stand as obstacles against the upliftment of society as well as what stands against truth and reason and what is the cause of the moral degradation of society."

2. Moved by Kishory Chand Mitra and seconded by Akshoy Kumar Dutt.

"That the association will do all it can towards the spread of female education, widow remarriage and the elimination of polygamy and child marriage."

3. Moved by Debendra Nath Tagore and seconded by Kishory Chand Mitra.

"That the association will send a memorial to the Legislative Council for the removal of hindrances of widow remarriage and for the present in a limited way try to establish girls' schools in towns, suburbs and other localities."

Sarbasubhakari Sabha and Sarbasubhakari Patrika. *Sarbasubhakari Patrika* was started by the senior students of the Hindu College and its first issue appeared in August 1850. The Patrika, it appears, was the mouthpiece of the Sarbasubhakari Sabha meant for all-round social welfare. In the first issue Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was requested to contribute to the journal and he wrote an article on "Widow Remarriage." In the second issue of the journal Pundit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar wrote an article on Female Education. The paper continued to get contributions from these two men famous for their work in the social field and not only enjoyed widespread popularity but did much for spreading progressive ideas and supporting the cause of women.

Brahmabāndhu Sabha and Antahpur Stri-siksha. The joining of the Tattwabodhini Sabha by the young Keshub Chunder Sen at the age of nineteen gave a tremendous impetus to the movement for social reform. Endowed with great literary talent, an orator of the highest order, with tremendous organisational powers, Keshub Chunder's contribution to the cause of women is indeed great. At a meeting called in the Brahmo Somaj Hall by Keshub Chunder in 1861 under the presidency of Shyama Charan Sarkar, Keshub Chunder delivered a lecture in which he laid great emphasis on the need of female education. In 1862 the Brahmabandhu Sabha was organised by some young men under the leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen. Among other things the Sabha took up the work of organising Antahpur Stri-siksha or home education of women. All efforts till now had been devoted to the organisation of girls' schools, to which only girls below eleven went. This was the first attempt on the part of the Hindu community to approach adult women. Haralal Roy, the Secretary, writes about the aims of the Antahpur Strisiksha :

"By the grace of God some schools for female education have been started. But as the girls cannot stay in the schools for more than two or three years the desired results cannot be attained. The Brahmabandhu Sabha has adopted a scheme by which girls can get really good education. According to this scheme, without going to school by appointing teachers at home or by being instructed by some members of the family girls can receive proper education. A report of the study must be sent four times a year to this association. Twice a year the girls will be examined and prizes will be distributed to deserving candidates."

According to this scheme, students were divided into five classes. The books to be studied in each class were prescribed. In April 1863 twelve students of this organisation received prizes.

Bamabodhini Sabha and Bamabodhini Patrika. The Bamabodhini Sabha was started in 1863 by Umesh Chandra Dutt, who next to Keshub Chunder Sen was a great worker in the cause of women's emancipation. In a letter written to Mary Carpenter¹ in 1866 the members of Bamabodhini Sabha inform her of the measures adopted by the Sabha for the improvement of "native females":

1. Publication of papers and periodicals to improve the intellect of native females.
2. Establishment of a system of prize essays for the encouragement of educated females.
3. Establishment of schools for the education of adult females belonging to gentle families and of an approved system of zenana training, as well as that of conferring prizes for encouragement of such students.
4. Offering every assistance that may be in our power for the establishment of girls' schools.

The Bamabodhini Patrika, the organ of the Sabha, started in 1864 under the editorship of Umesh Chandra Dutt who continued to be its editor till his death in 1907, though the Patrika itself continued till 1928, did signal service in the cause of women. The *Bamabodhini Patrika* is a mine of accurate information about the progress of women. It also afforded women means to express their literary abilities, many women authors who became famous later having had their maiden efforts published in this journal.

At the end of 1863 the Brahmabandhu Sabha gave over the charge of the Antahpur Strisiksha to the Bamabodhini Sabha. Since then the Bamabodhini Sabha had been conducting the work in accordance with their previous scheme and in April 1864 a new list of text-books for the members was published in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*. In it the time for Antahpur Strisiksha has been divided into five years. For two years 1862 and 1863 the work of the organisation was in the hands of the Brahmabandhu Sabha and for three years 1865, 1866 and 1867 in the hands of the Bamabodhini Sabha.

Similar societies for imparting home-education to women and girls were started elsewhere with considerable success and we find

¹ The letter is published in "*Six Months in India*" by Mary Carpenter and was kindly supplied to me by Mr. Jogesh Chandra Bagal.

favourable mention of this method in the *Reports of the Director of Public Instruction*.

The Deputy Inspector of Nuddea writes,

"In a country like this, education of girls in the zenana is highly desirable and the advantages of such institutions cannot be overestimated. It is, therefore, with feelings of unfeigned satisfaction that I record the establishment of a zenana education club at Belladanga in the town of Krishnanagore. Fourteen pupils on an average age of seventeen years are thus receiving instructions through the agency of the association." (*Report on Public Instruction of 1864-1865*.)

In the very next year's report it is stated that the zenana agencies have been increased to 19.

The Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha was started in 1864 through the efforts of the zemindars of Uttarpara. Miss Mary Carpenter¹ gives some account of the work of the Sabha. The aim of the Sabha as stated in its first report is as follows:

"The great objects of the Hitakorri Sobha (Sabha) are to educate the poor, to help the needy, to clothe the naked, to give medicines to the indigent sick, to support poor widows and orphans, to promote the cause of temperance as a branch of the Bengal Temperance Society and to ameliorate the social, moral and intellectual conditions of the members themselves and their fellow inhabitants of Uttarpara.

Miss Mary Carpenter tells us that the efforts of the Society was "chiefly directed to women's education, which specially required their attention and that in the promotion of this great zeal had been displayed by the Society." Quoting a later report she tells us, "they had laid the foundation of the system of female education upon which it is hoped the government would raise the superstructure."

The following account is given of her visit to the institution in 1866:

"We first proceeded to the girls' school where we found the Secretary of the Society Babu Peary Mohan Bannerjee with its most distinguished supporters. The young ladies looked bright and intelligent and we went from class to class which was being examined by the Pundit. All girls answered well. A considerable stimulus is given by the general examinations of all the schools affiliated to the Hitakori Sobha in the month of March every year. Scholarships of one rupee and two rupees are awarded every month. This continues for one year on condition that the holder prosecutes her studies during that time. The examinations are in writing and the answers indicate good mental powers and considerable proficiency. Young ladies who are obliged to leave the school on account of marriage are allowed to continue their studies in the zenanna and to hold scholarships. A native convert teacher who is employed in the school visits them in their homes and conducts the necessary examinations. Specimens of good needle-work were shown to us, and here, as in many other schools, I was impressed by the great capabilities of Hindu girls and with regret that these have no adequate means of development. The younger classes here as elsewhere suffered from want of proper teachers.

¹ Miss Mary Carpenter's account in her book *Six Months in India* was supplied to me by Mr. Jogesh Chandra Bagal.

The activities of the Hitakari Sabha received continuous appreciation in the Reports on Public Instruction in Bengal.

*“Several girls’ schools have been established in Howrah and Hoogly districts. The Hitakari Sabha with a view to encouraging these institutions have resolved to hold general examinations at the end of February 1865 and to institute eight scholarships of two-rupees tenable for one year. (*Report on Public Instruction 1864-65*).
 * * * * The schools in the immediate neighbourhood of Uttarpara appear to flourish owing to the stimulus given to them by the scholarships distributed by the Hitakari Sabha
 * * * * The chief authority on the subject of female education in the Burdwan division is the Hitakari Sabha, the eleventh report of which body is now before me, in which the inaction of the district committee for not granting scholarships for girls of girls’ schools is made the subject of comment as well as some of my (Mr. Hopkin’s) comments in last year’s report (*Report on Public Instruction 1876-77*).”

Further reports of the Society show that the Hitakari Sabha extended its sphere of activities to the whole of Burdwan Division and that the spread of girls’ education in West Bengal is not a little due to the activities of this Society. In the *Report on Public Instruction of 1902-1903* we are told, “The Hitakari Sabha are earnestly working in the field of female education and they deserve the best thanks of the government and all the Indian community for their efforts.” The work of the Society is still being carried on but from 1922 for lack of government help the Hitakari Sabha had to restrict its efforts to the Howrah and Hoogly districts. Though its work may not be so striking now when there has been a tremendous spread of girls’ education and the benefits of girls’ education are generally acknowledged, its work as the foremost non-missionary institution in the spread of women’s education cannot be overestimated.

The work of the Hitakari Sabha was carried out mainly among school-girls though zenana education was not precluded from its sphere of activity. From the report of 1938-41 we see that from 1870-1900 fifty-four girls passed the zenana examination of the Society. Soon however a crop of organisations sprang up in many districts of Bengal who did much to spread education in the villages and who concentrated on zenana education or education of girls over the age of 12.

Four such organisations are mentioned in the Presidency Division in the *Report on Public Instruction*: (1) the Jessore-Khulna Union, (2) the Taki Hitakari Sabha, (3) the Central Bengal Union and (4) the Sripur Hitasadhini Sabha. We are told that all these societies were doing good work in promoting female education. The District Committees of Public Instructions, Jessore and Khulna, each paid one hundred rupees to the Jessore-Khulna Union on this account.

Similar organisation sprang up in East Bengal. We find mention of these in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*.

Barisal Female Improvement Association was established in 1871. It had no connection with the Brahmo Samaj as such but was established mainly through the efforts of Brahmos. Its object was to encourage education among females of the district through prescribing text-books for several classes established by it, fixing a date for the examination and conducting the examination, generally in January, by means of printed examination papers set by examiners appointed by the association. The result was published within a month and prizes in the form of books, boxes, glasses and other things of everyday use were awarded to the successful candidates, the expenses being defrayed by local subscription and annual grant-in-aid of Rs. 100 sanctioned by Government from 1874. (*Brahmo Year Book* 1877).

The Sylhet Sammilan was started in 1877. From the fifth annual report published in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* we learn that 145 students had sat for the examination conducted by the Society. Out of these 133 passed. Of these 53 were married, 12 widows and the rest unmarried. 45 students were studying in schools and the rest at home. Four scholarships were given and prizes worth Rs. 163-6 as. were distributed. (*Bamabodhini Patrika*, October 1882).

Vikrampur Sammilani was started by Dwarkanath Ganguly under his presidentship in 1879. Dwarkanath's contribution to the cause of women's emancipation and the education of women is very great. In fact he earned for himself the affectionate title of "Abala-Bandhab," the Friend of Women, from the name given to his paper started at Lonsing while still a young man and published under this title. The aims of the Vikrampur Sammilan were: (1) Moral improvement of Vikrampur, (2) Women's education and other welfare work. Through the efforts of the Society in the very first year of its existence several schools were started in the villages of Vikrampur. But the education imparted by the Samiti is distinguished from the work of other Samitis. Dwarkanath tells us in the first report of the Society that as the girls who were being educated by the Society did not aspire to be scholars, time should not be wasted in memorising facts of History or mastering Geographical details, or even in learning Grammar in the usual way, but attention should be concentrated on language and Physiology. (Abala Bandhab Dwarkanath Ganguly by Brajendranath Bannerjee. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Pujah Number, 1357 B.S.). From the third year's report of the Association we learn that the Society was doing very good work. Whereas examinees who sat for the examination of the Society in the previous year came from 41 villages, in the year

under review examinees came from 55 villages. 225 examinees sat for the examination and 222 were successful and got prizes. Of the examinees 114 were married, 104 unmarried and 8 were widows. Rs. 398-10 as. was spent for prizes and scholarships and Rs. 73 was given as aid to girls' schools. (*Bamabodhini Patrika*, October 1882).

Faridpur Surhid Sangha was started in 1880 or 1881. We learn from the *Bamabodhini Patrika* that its second anniversary was held in the City College and prizes were distributed. Under the auspices of the Sangha 198 girls sat for various examinations of whom 127 passed. Many of the girls passed with distinction. The girls who sat for the examination were collected from 44 villages in Faridpur. Among the examinees was a woman of forty. We find the Faridpur Surhid Sangha well mentioned in the *Report of the Director of Public Instruction, 1886-87*.

Many societies of this nature were established and we see that one existed in almost every district. In the *Report on Public Instruction* we find mention of the **Tipperah Zenana Education Society** which was aided by government, the **Backergunge Hitaishini Sabha**, and the **Mymensingh Sammilan**. The valuable work done by all these societies in organising and spreading female education in the villages of Bengal is inestimable.

Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes. Though women and girls of the higher castes, who form only a small percentage of the total women of Bengal, were availing themselves of the educational facilities offered, the depressed classes who form the bulk of the population were still steeped in ignorance. Missionary Societies had worked among them but not without the motive of converting them to the Christian faith. The Christian converts among them who were educated naturally had no influence on the rest of their caste. The depressed class Hindus became educationally conscious only through the efforts of this Society. Once more a few Brahmos by lifelong devoted service created a social revolution.

The Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes was started in the year 1909 under the name of the **Depressed Classes Mission for East Bengal and Assam** by a few earnest workers of the Brahmo Sadhan Asram (a mission agency of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj) under the inspiration and guidance of late Sivnath Sastri. On the 23rd August 1909 Babus Hemendranath Dutta and Harinarayan Sen went to a Namasudra village in Berash, 30 miles from Dacca. Harinarayan Sen, then a young man, who devoted his life to the cause of the depressed classes, stayed in the village, boarding with a Namasudra family, and after much effort overcoming strong opposition engineered by caste Hindus was able to establish a school

there. Once started on its career the Society went forward with its work with single-minded devotion. By 1914 we find that there are schools started by the Society in a great many districts—Dacca, Mymensingh, Backergunge, Tipperah, Noakhali, Rangpore and Jessore. There were girls' schools at Berash (Dacca), Malliat, Kaminidanga and Andha (Jessore), and Kherihar (Backergunge). The next year we see more girls' schools started—the Duiangaon Muchipara school and the Duiangaon Girls' L.P. school, as well as the Satyabari Girls' school, all in Dacca district.

Already in 1914 the Society had been renamed The Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes as there was considerable dissatisfaction among the people for whose benefit the Society had been started. In 1916 the Society received many applications from the backward communities in Burdwan, Rajshahi, Murshidabad, Midnapore, Khulna, and other districts for starting schools in these districts so that the work of the Society was considerably extended. By 1918-1919 the effect of the work of the Society had borne unexpected fruit. We are told, "A very perceptible though indirect result of the activities of the Society is the growth of a keen desire for education among the backward classes which for want of funds the Society has not been able to meet to the full extent." In the report of 1923 we find that the Society is running 1 H. E. school with 183 pupils, 10 M. E. schools with 736 pupils, 270 boys primary schools with 955 pupils, 16 boys primary night schools with 462 pupils and 107 girls' schools with 4,057 girls.

The following appreciation of the Society from the poet Rabin-dranath Tagore speaks for itself:

"The Society for the Improvement of Backward Classes, Bengal and Assam, has been doing excellent work for the diffusion of education among the backward classes irrespective of creed and caste for more than seventeen years. It maintains more than 400 schools in twenty-two districts in which over sixteen thousand boys and girls receive education. Up to now more than twenty-five thousand children have passed out of its schools after acquiring the rudiments of knowledge. The Society manages its affairs with efficiency and integrity, not a pice of its income being wasted. It deserves every help from the public in the shape of endowments, donations and monthly and yearly subscriptions."

(Sd.) RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

Jorasanko, Calcutta

April 27, 1928.

The work of the Society has received a considerable set-back due to the partition of India and the unsettled condition of the Hindus of East Bengal. Again just as the Society was planning to reorient its work on more needful and useful lines starting schools with agricultural and technical bias and devoting its energies more

towards adult education, the life-long Secretary of the Institution Mr. Harinarayan Sen died in 1949, leaving the Society orphaned.

Women's Protection League or Nari Raksha Samiti. We have seen how certain followers of Keshub Chunder Sen who, because of their progressive views had formed the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, worked hard for the emancipation of women in all spheres. A group of young men, amongst whom may be prominently mentioned Dwarkanath Ganguly and Krishna Kumar Mitra, took up the difficult and arduous task of going to the quarters where prostitutes lived and persuading them to give their young daughters for upbringing, education and rehabilitation in decent life. With them, in their visits, was associated Mrs. Ananda Mohon Bose, to whom all honour must be given as a woman pioneer worker in this field. In this way the Brahmo Somaj was able to rescue many girls. These girls were not isolated and kept in a Rescue Home but were brought up as one of the daughters of different Brahmo families. All of these girls were very well married. A good number of Brahmos, specially Shivnath Sastri, Durgamohon Das and others helped and supported this work, unique in its kind, because of the spirit in which it was accomplished.

The Women's Protection League was started in 1924 by Krishna Kumar Mitra as abduction cases became more frequent. Up to now the only fate that awaited abducted and enticed women who were later deserted was to swell the ranks of fallen women. The perpetrators of these heinous crimes went unpunished as the families of the abducted women were either unable or unwilling to take up the matter legally, and, as often as not, the crimes were perpetrated on women who had no male members to protect them.

The work of the League was threefold: (1) To bring to justice men who were engaged in crimes against women, (2) the prevention of such crimes by means of propaganda, volunteer organisation and the strengthening of statutory laws against such crimes, and (3) the rescue of suffering women and their restoration to family life, wherever possible, and providing for their education and training for the earning of a decent livelihood.

Statistics are not easy to get of this nature of crime for reasons given above but the statistics in the office of the League showed that the number of women abducted and outraged from 1926 to 1931, a matter of five years, were a total of 7012. Of these outrages, those committed by Hindus on Hindu women were 3513 and by Hindus on Mohamedan women were 39. The number of outrages by Mohamedans on Mohamedan women were 3299 and by Mohamedans

on Hindu women were 686. The number of Hindu and Mohamedan women not classified were 1728.

Apart from this there were gang rapes of a particularly appalling nature. The number of such cases by Hindus were 131, by Mohamedans were 337 and by combined Hindus and Mohamedans 54.

In spite of the heavy legal expenses and the great trouble of finding evidence against these desperados we find the League undertaking 75 cases in the law-courts and in all the cases the accused were convicted. Of these the history of 20 sensational cases is given in the report of 1935-37. Apart from this the persistent efforts of the League roused public consciousness to a sense of duty towards these unfortunate sisters of ours so that young men in the neighbourhood became active in preventing such cases. Gang rapes, as is seen from the Society's report of 1936-37, were on the decrease. As a direct result of the efforts of the League, whipping was included in the criminal code amongst other punishments in crimes against women.

The Nari Kalyan Asram was started in order to give shelter to abducted women and other women who had been enticed or rescued from ruffians, or found themselves otherwise in circumstances which made them homeless.

After the death of its founder, Krishna Kumar Mitra, the Society lost its main strength and inspiration but even now the Society is in existence.

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS BY WOMEN FOR WOMEN

Brahmika Somaj. This Society was formed in 1865 under the inspiration of Keshub Chunder Sen. The Brahmika Somaj or the Brahmo Women's Society as the name indicates, held its meetings in the house of a Brahmo in Pataldanga Street. Keshub Chunder Sen himself conducted the prayers and gave religious and moral instructions, and it was the members of this Society who for the first time on the 23rd of January 1866 attended the Maghotsab celebrations in the Brahmo Somaj Hall along with men, though sitting behind a net curtain. On the 24th November 1866, the women of the Brahmika Somaj invited Miss Mary Carpenter and gave her a welcome address. They also attended a mixed evening party given by Mr. Suryakumar Goodeve Chuckerbutty in honour of Miss Mary Carpenter. This was perhaps the first time that Indian ladies attended such a function. A pamphlet entitled *Advice to Women* was written by Keshub Chunder Sen for the benefit of the members of the Society. (*Acharya Keshub Chunder Sen* by Upadhyaya Gour Govinda Roy.)

The Bhagalpur Brahmika Somaj. The Society was formed under

the inspiration of Dr. K. D. Ghose, a close friend of Keshub Chunder Sen, and father of Sree Aurobindo probably a year after the formation of the Brahmika Somaj in Calcutta. The Society was however more radical than the one started at Calcutta. We quote the following extract about the Society from the *Brahmo Year Book*:

"After Dr Krishnadhan Ghose had joined the Bhagalpur Brahmo Somaj it received a strong impetus to work social reforms. This was mainly directed towards the improvement of women. No efforts were spared to train up the Brahmikas in the habits of freedom and high ideas of religious and moral life. The Brahmicos also exerted themselves in educating the ladies to enable them to mix respectably in social intercourse. In fact such was the attention bestowed by the Bhagalpur Brahmo Somaj to the improvement of ladies that in some quarters their actions were made the subject of unfavourable remark. (*Brahmo Year Book*, 1882).

Mr. Prabhat Ganguly claims that this was the first association of women but as Dr. K. D. Ghose seems to have gone to Bhagalpur in 1866 this is scarcely tenable.

We get reference of similar Brahmika Somajes in Barisal and Dacca in the *Brahmo Year Book*.

The Brahmika Somajes were however confined to Brahmo women and organised mainly for their moral and spiritual improvement though undoubtedly they had a progressive influence as the criticism of the Bhagalpur Brahmika Somaj shows. They certainly helped in the free mixing of men and women and encouraged liberal ideas.

Bama Hitaishini Sabha. This may be taken as the first association of women of a secular and non-denominational character. It was established on the 28th April 1871 under the inspiration of Keshub Chunder Sen through the enthusiasm of the pupils of the Native Female Normal and Adult School with Keshub Chunder as President and Radharani Lahiri as Secretary. The membership of the Sabha was open to women of all religions and the male teachers of the Female Normal School. The aim of the Association was the all-round improvement of women. The Association met every fortnight on Fridays and in the meetings there were lectures, discussions and the reading of papers by women. At the second fortnightly meeting Keshub Chunder Sen presided, Bijoy Krishna Goswami spoke on the all-round improvement of women, and four women students of the Normal School read papers. Among the 30 ladies present were Mrs. Monomohun Ghose, Miss Pigott and Mrs. W. C. Bonnerjee. (*Bamabodhini Patrika*, May 1872.)

The first anniversary of the Association was held at the garden of Rani Swarnamoyi on the 26th April 1872. From the annual report we learn that that the Sabha had 24 or 25 members and that at the fortnightly meetings such subjects as true education, true

freedom, social intercourse, dress, modesty, humility, etc., were discussed. Keshub Chunder Sen addressed the meeting on the right education for women. Several students of the Normal School also addressed the meeting.

The Second Anniversary Meeting was held on the 21st June 1873 at Belgharia. A detailed account of the meeting is given in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*. No other reports of the activities of the Sabha are given in the *Bamabodhini Patrika*, but the Sabha seems to have continued, though not so vigorously, till 1879. In fact differences between Keshub Chunder Sen and his younger followers, Dwarkanath Ganguly and Durgamohon Das, on the type of education to be given to girls and other more fundamental social reforms had led to a schism in the Brahmo Somaj. As early as 1873 the progressive group in the Brahmo Somaj headed by Dwarkanath Ganguly had started the Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya, later converted into the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya which played such an essential part in the development of the higher education of women.

In 1879 two new associations were formed, the Arya Nari Samaj and Banga Mahila Samaj.

The Arya Nari Samaj was started in April 1879 (27th of Vaisak 1286 B.S.). Its chief aim was to reform the social condition of the women of Bengal embracing all spheres, according to ancient Aryan Hindu customs, basing the reforms on the clear recognition of the fact that women had some special duties to perform and accepting liberally what was good in other countries while preserving whatever was worthy to be preserved in national usage and custom. It was also stressed that social reform should be based on religion and not encourage luxurious habits or blind imitation of the West.

We see from the above that already some check is sought to be placed on the pace of progress in women's advance as well as too great a Westernisation of Indian womanhood.

The first executive committee of the Arya Nari Samaj was formed with Srimatis Saudamini, Radharani, Rajlakshmi, Golap and Kumudini. Meetings of the Association were fixed fortnightly at the house of the President, and from the second annual report, we find that discussions took place on such subjects as, 'whether men or women are superior,' 'freedom of women,' 'following the example of the chaste ancient Aryan women,' etc.

The annual meetings of the Society seems to have been held during the Maghotsab ceremony of the Brahmo Somaj, and sweets, food, clothes and money were distributed to poor women. In the first annual celebration there was a prayer meeting in the morning followed by a lecture on Electricity by Father Lafont.

In November 1880, the Arya Nari Samaj took over the charge of the Metropolitan Female School, variously referred to as the Stri Vidyalaya (*Paricharika*) or the Mirzapore School (*Director of Public Instruction's Report*), its members engaging themselves in teaching in the school. The school was an adult school for girls.

In 1887 the Arya Nari Samaj also took over the charge of the *Paricharika*, formerly conducted by Pratap Chandra Majumdar. Its first woman editor was Mohini Devi, the daughter-in-law of Keshub Chunder Sen. The *Mahila* of December 1895 mentions the reconstitution of the Arya Nari Samaj which it appears had lapsed. The *Bamabodhini Patrika* of 1905 tells us that the Arya Nari Samaj was still carrying on its work, and that Monika Mahalanabis, the youngest daughter of Keshub Chunder Sen, was the editor of the *Paricharika*. In 1916 the *Paricharika* became a beautifully illustrated paper edited by Princess Nirupama.

The Banga Mahila Samaj was started on the 1st of August 1879. Just as the Arya Nari Samaj was connected with Keshub Chunder Sen's Nababidhan Somaj or Church of the New Dispensation, the Banga Mahila Samaj was connected with the Sadharan Samaj. The following account of the Society is given in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* of November 1879:

"From the 1st August last a new association called the Banga Mahila Samaj was started. The aim of the association is to effect the improvement of Bengali women socially, morally, mentally and spiritually. To attain this object the following ways have been devised. On the first and third Saturdays of each month prayers, religious instructions, and discussions are held. On the second Saturday of the month a meeting is held in the Bethune School at which papers are read and discussions are held. On the last Saturday of the month the news of the month is discussed and there is a social reunion of the members with song and entertainment. The members of the working committee also visit the houses of the members and help to teach them domestic work, handwork and literature. Already the association has forty members."

From its first annual report reproduced in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* of February 1880 we find that discussions were held at its meetings on such subjects as, 'how can women be useful in the present condition of society,' 'the virtues of the ideal woman,' 'the influence of women in society,' 'love of luxury,' etc. We also find that both men and women were present at the social gatherings and there was free social intercourse. This as well as its progressive and intellectual bias sharply distinguished this Society from its sister Society, the Arya Nari Samaj. The office-bearers of the Society, Radharani Lahiri, the President, and Swarnaprabha Bose, the Secretary, were also women who had received higher education. We are told that the Society published the *Prabandhalatika*, a collection of essays useful for women, written by Radharani Lahiri. We hear

also of an exhibition of handicrafts by women being organised in which some Englishwomen took part. This was perhaps the first exhibition of the kind organised by women. Miss Collet makes very favourable mention of this Association in her *Brahmo Year Book*. The annual celebrations of this Association were held in the form of a whole day celebration in the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj during the Maghotsab celebrations, on the 9th of Magh. The present women's day on the 9th of Magh during the Maghotsab seems to be a survival of this celebration. We find the progress of this Society followed affectionately in detail from year to year in the *Bamabodhini Patrika* till in 1905 it is regretfully announced that the Society has ceased to exist. The contribution of this progressive association of women in giving a modern shape to the progress of women, specially in free social intercourse, is great.

The Victoria College. Though we have not brought women's educational institutions within the purview of this article, a passing mention of this and two other institutions is necessary to give a complete picture. The starting of the Victoria College was the first attempt to embody a different educational ideal for women from that which was embodied in the other educational institutions for women. The Victoria College was started on the 1st of May 1882 at 10 Upper Circular Road under the presidentship of Keshub Chunder Sen. The reason for starting the institution was the disapproval of Keshub Chunder Sen with regard to imparting higher education for women on the same lines as men. Already in 1878 the Bethune School after its amalgamation with the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya had become a High English school for girls. The next year a First Year Arts class was also opened. In the prospectus of the Victoria College drawn up on the 31st March 1882 Keshub Chunder Sen writes:

"For want of a high and in all ways complete form of education for Indian women the nature of education imparted remains quite incomplete. * * * * That special education is required to fulfil the special duties necessary for women for filling her proper sphere cannot be denied. To give them the same education and to make them solicitous to earn fame and titles are both wrong and resulting in evil. Thus to give women the same education as men and either to distort their natures or direct their attention to dress and the outward veneer of civilization would be to merely cause their misfortune. The proposed College will carefully avoid this and teach them to be good Hindu wives and Hindu mothers. * * * * In this College the simple truths of science, health and hygiene, grammar and composition, history and geography, domestic science and the ideals of Hindu womanhood will be taught. The scriptures, painting, and needlework also will be taught."

The Victoria Institution is now an ordinary school and college for girls, so that we see that this attempt of Keshub Chunder Sen to preserve the ancient Aryan ideals of womanhood while giving a

OUR FIRST CHAMPIONS



RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY



BRAHMANANDA KESHUB CHUNDER SEN



DWARAKANATH GANGULI

PIONEERS IN WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL WORK



SWARNAKUMARI DEBI
Famous author and Founder, Sakhi Samiti



MATAJI MAHARANI TAPASWINI
*Religious ascetic and Founder, Mahakali
Pathsala*



SISTER NIVEDITA
Founder, Nivedita School



MRS. MARGARET COUSINS
Founder-Secy., All-India Women's Conference

modern bias to education failed in its object. The time-spirit is inexorable both in construction and destruction.

The Mahakali Pathshala was started in 1893 like the Victoria College as a protest against the current system of education of girls on the same lines as the education of boys, its purpose being to educate girls on strictly national lines in the hope that they might regenerate Hindu society. The institution was founded by Mataji Maharani Tapaswini (Ganga Bai), a pious Brahmin lady of the Deccan deeply learned in Sanskrit and well-versed in the Shastras, who came from Nepal with the idea of starting an institution for girls, not merely to impart academic education but to instil in their minds religious and moral principles which would make them good members of Hindu society. Cornelia Sorabji, the first woman barrister in India, a Parsi Christian, wrote about Mataji: "No one who had ever seen her could forget Mataji, a woman sent from God, remarkable in physical appearance, more remarkable in that indefinable atmosphere that sets apart the servant of God man or woman from ordinary people." The basic principles of the Mahakali system are given as follows:

(1) The strict observance of Shastric injunctions in matters of domestic life.

(2) The inculcation of *Patibrata Dharma* as exemplified in the lives of Sita, Sabitri, Anusuya, etc.

(3) The observance of the duties of a Hindu female as daughter, sister, wife, mother, and lastly relative and neighbour.

(4) The culture of the intellect of the girls and imbuing their minds with a knowledge of their literature and history such as is contained in the Kavyas and Puranas.

(5) The teaching of economic duties such as sewing, cooking, keeping accounts, drawing Alipana, etc.

The Mahakali Pathshala published its own text-books, *Mahakali Path*, parts 1 and 2 (Bengali Reader specially meant for girls), *Mahakali Sanskrit Path*, *Mul Ramayana*, (portions of the original Sanskrit Ramayana with their Bengali translation), *Sadhwi Sadachar* (intended to teach morality to the girls on Hindu precedents), *Prasnottarmala* (a catechism also meant for the training of girls on the above lines), *Stutimala* (a book of hymns or *Stotras* with Bengali translation), *Shiva Puja Paddhati* (with notes, etc.).

The institution had seven classes and in the highest class Sanskrit *Raghuvangsa*, *Rijupath*, *Upakramanika Byakaran* were taught as well as *Bangla Byakaran*, *Kadambari* and *Kabita Prasanga* in Bengali.

The school was started in 1893 with 30 students but gained so

much popularity that in 1903 the students increased to 450, a roll strength far superior to any girls' school at the time, that of the Bethune school being very much lower. Encouraged both by English and Indian patrons, the school did very good work, specially in the sphere of adult education. In 1903, 69 Sukeas Street was purchased for a permanent habitation for the school. The school still occupies the same site now numbered 35C Kailas Bose Street. In 1906 Mataji transferred the property of the school to the name of the Hon'ble Rameswar Singh Bahadur, Maharaja of Darbhanga, who was made the trustee of the institution. In 1926 the school was again transferred by him to three trustees or their assignees, Manmatha Nath Mukerjee, Justice, Calcutta High Court, Woomesh Chandra Bannerjee, Coal Merchant and Jogendranath Mukherjee, son of Priyanath Mukherjee.

In 1948 the institution was affiliated to the Calcutta University. Attempts are made to preserve the old ideals of the school through the regular Pujah of the deities established in the premises and by the performance by the girls of Saraswati Puja, the Virastami Brata, and the performance of Shiva Puja throughout the month of Baisakh. But like the Victoria Institution, the Mahakali Pathshala also has been drawn gradually into the vortex of the current educational system and has been unable to preserve its ideals.

The Nivedita School rose out of Swami Vivekananda's desire to start a nunnery which would combine in it all that was best in Eastern and Western culture and impart the same to seeking women students. The plan was to make the institution a centre for a grand educational movement. Sister Nivedita was drawn to the idea and came to India in 1898. She took a little house at 16 Bosepara Lane and with the advice of Swami Vivekananda began living as an ordinary Hindu lady, starting a kindergarten school for girls as tentative work. In 1902 Sister Christina came and joined Sister Nivedita and plans were made to start a women's school as well. The free services of a Brahmo lady teacher, Labonyaprova Bose, were secured and it was decided that the curriculum of studies would be reading, writing, sewing and readings and discourses from the lives of great religious leaders. It was also decided that the Purdah system would not be violated. Some sixty women attended on the first day, and the utility of the school was proved beyond doubt after a year's regular work. Both sisters were familiar with the latest teaching methods of the West and they used a few Brahmo English-knowing girls who had come to learn Western methods of education from them as their interpreters. In 3 or 4 years some of the more advanced students of the school could be utilised as teachers for the new-comers and

a monthly allowance was paid according to their capacities. Thus the school began to find its own teachers and the work went on smoothly with very little expense. From the 3rd year new subjects were added to the curriculum, such as sewing, fancy-needle-work, painting, modelling, and discourses on history and geography with occasional discourses on anatomy and physiology. The students were also taken for excursions to the Zoo, the Museum, the Botanical Gardens, and other places where their powers of observation could be developed. Soon it was considered that to complete the education some kind of craft should also be taught. Knitting and spinning was introduced and it was being considered whether weaving too should be introduced. But the students showed no enthusiasm for this. The Sisters with their quick understanding realised that the women came from intellectual classes and, therefore, for earning an independent livelihood teaching would be a better means of livelihood. They, therefore, started a teachers' training class with the more intelligent students. The subjects taught were, Bengali, History, Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, English, Sanskrit, Geometry, brush-work, needle-work, Kindergarten methods. The curriculum of the school was for the first two years, Bengali reading and writing, Arithmetic, Geography (taught orally), stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, drawings from observation, brush-work, clay-modelling, mat-weaving, paper-folding, stick-laying, 'card-sewing, and Kindergarten-gifts. In the third year English was introduced, and later grammar, history, cutting and tailoring. In the most advanced classes Sanskrit was taught.

Thus we see that the school was different from other schools of the time, being an adult school, and that education was here given on modern and progressive lines, in the context of Indian culture, without making it academic. As a new experiment it is remarkable. Unfortunately though for long the school struggled to maintain its ideal and in spite of some devoted women-workers the school is now not very different from other high schools.

The Saradweswari Asram was started at the end of 1914 by Sister Sudhira. It was meant as a Home for Brahmacharins and the girl boarders of the school were also lodged there. It is here that the atmosphere of Hindu culture is maintained, and some attempt is made to regulate the lives of the inmates according to the ideas of Brahmacharya which entails spiritual discipline. Household work so important in the lives of women is also enforced. Religious and scriptural classes are arranged in the Mandir.

We will now go on with the account of various women's associations.

The Sakhi Samiti was started in 1896 mainly through the efforts of Swarnakumari Devi, daughter of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and sister of Rabindranath Tagore, herself a well-known novelist. With her were associated other members of the Tagore family and some other ladies of progressive views. The following free translation of an extract from *Bharati* and *Balak* 1898 will show the aims and objects of the Samiti:

“Three years ago a women’s association named Sakhi Samiti was formed so that women of respectable families should have the opportunity of mixing with each other and devoting themselves to the cause of social welfare. The generous Rani Swarnamoyi has helped the Samiti immensely by the gift of Rs. 1,025 for the work of the Samiti. The first aim of the Samiti is to help the helpless orphans and widows. This will be done in two ways. In those cases where such widows and orphans have no near relations or if these relations have not the means of maintaining them the Sakhi Samiti will take their full responsibility. In other cases the Samiti will give them monetary help as far as possible. In the cases of those women whose full responsibility the Samiti will take they will educate them and through them spread women’s education. After they have finished their education they will take up the work of zenana education. The Samiti will give them remuneration for their work. In this way two objects will be accomplished. Hindu widows will be able to earn through service to others according to the sanction of Hindu religion, an independent living, and a way will be found for the spread of female education.”

It was soon found that membership subscription was not sufficient for carrying on this work. It was, therefore, decided to hold an annual exhibition of handicrafts in which women’s handicrafts would be well represented. The first exhibition was held in the Bethune College in 1294 B.S. and was opened by Lady Bayley and visited by Lady Lansdowne. The following description of this exhibition is given in the *Bharati* and *Balak* of 1295 B.S.:

“In the centre of the open courtyard a pandal was erected. In the centre of the pandal was a flower-stall inside a beautifully erected bower. In the rooms and covered verandah running round the courtyard were the stalls with all kinds of beautiful things which women would like to purchase. Women were in charge of the sales. Some sold jewels, some silk saris, some Dacca and Santipur saris, some toys, some women’s handicrafts.

“Special mention is made of the clay models, embroideries in silk and gold-thread, Alpanas, Kanthas, paintings and sweetmeats in beautiful designs made by women. Characteristic handicrafts from all parts of India, Moradabad, Kashmir, Agra, Bombay, Benares, Jaipur, Krishnagore, Birbhum etc. were exhibited. On the last day *Mayar Khela* was acted by the girls.

These exhibitions were annually conducted for some years. We find the Samiti mentioned in the *Bamabodhini* of 1905. But by 1906 its activities were dying out and from its ashes rose the Hiranmoyi Bidhaba Asram.

Hiranmoyi Bidhaba Asram seems to have grown up from the ashes of the Sakhi Samiti. In April 1906 under the auspices of the Silpa Samiti, which had conducted the annual exhibitions of the Sakhi

Samiti, the Mahila Bidhaba Asram was started. It is known that some widows were being maintained by the Sakhi Samiti. When enthusiasm for the Sakhi Samiti began toebb these women had to be provided for. Hiranmoyi Devi, the eldest daughter of Swarnakumari Devi, had, we are told in the *Bharati* by Sarala Devi, lost several children and her mother's heart went out to these helpless widows whom she brought and kept in her own home. The Widows' Home maintained by Sashi Bhusan Bandopadhyaya at Baranagore which we may take to be the first Widows' Home started in Bengal inspired Hiranmoyi Devi to start a Widows' Home in Calcutta and the Mahila Bidhaba Asram was started at 9 Shib Naryan Das Lane. The aim of the Silpa Samiti which conducted the Home was firstly to give a home to homeless widows, secondly, to train these widows in such crafts as could make them self-supporting along with elementary general education. For this purpose classes were held from 12 to 3 p.m. at which the following handicrafts were taught: spinning and weaving, making of stockings and vests on hand-machines, making lace, tailoring and cutting, drawing and painting, clay-modelling and carving, music and singing, elementary nursing, health and hygiene, and home-doctoring. Many poor day-scholars as well as women in affluent circumstances attended the classes and learnt such subjects as drawing and painting, music and singing as well as sewing, cutting, embroidery, clay-modelling and carving. From the subjects taught it will be seen that the handicrafts taught were given an aesthetic bias. The present institutions for women, such as the Bani Bhawan, the Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Industrial School, as well as the industrial schools run by the All-India Women's Conference can well take a leaf from this first industrial school for women. In any case little new in this line seems to have been endeavoured. We learn from a report of the Samiti published in the *Bharati* (Aswin 1315 B.S.) that there were 30 inmates and 50 day-scholars. We also learn that larger accommodation was needed to meet the demand of both the day-scholars and the inmates seeking admission. It is also notable that at the first stage some Englishwomen daily helped in conducting some of the classes. Among the members of the managing committee, when the Mahila Bidhaba Asram was started, were the Maharani Suniti Devi of Cooch-Behar, Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj (both daughters of Keshub Chunder Sen), Swarnakumari Devi, Lady Hamilton, Priyamvada Devi, Mrs. Chapman, Mrs. S. P. Sinha and Hiranmoyi Devi who was the Secretary. The Mahila Bidhaba Asram was renamed the Hiranmoyi Bidhaba Asram to commemorate Hiranmoyi Devi after her death, and is still running quite efficiently. Mrs. Kalyani Mallick, the

daughter of Hiranmoyi Devi, is now guiding the affairs of the institution.

Bharat Stri Mahamandal was started by Sarala Devi Chaudurani, younger daughter of Sreemati Swarnakumari Devi, in 1910. Sarala Devi was already a leading figure in Indian politics and founder of the Birastami Club, the famous revolutionary physical culture organisation of Bengal. The Bharat Stri Mahamandal was conceived as an all-India organisation which was to have branches in all the provinces in India. At an All-India Ladies Conference held in connection with the Congress session in Allahabad in December 1910 the organisation was formally opened. In her inspiring address at the Conference which was presided over by the Rani of Jajira and at which were present the Ranis of Vijayanagar, Pratapnagar, Kapur-tala, and the Begums of Bhopal and Cambay, Sarala Devi spoke about the aims of the organisation. The chief aim was to be the spread of female education, but as the purdah system and child marriage were the main obstacles to the education of women it was proposed to start organisations in every province whose function it would be to collect money and engage teachers who would be sent to the houses of those who desired to educate their wives and daughters. Text-books suitable for teaching Indian women should be written or adapted for the purpose, women should try to enrich the vernacular literature, organise selling centres for women's handi-crafts, and do what they could to afford medical treatment to women.

Luckily for Bengal at this time, the work of the Bengal branch was taken up by Krishnabhabini Das who had been at Cambridge with her husband for fourteen years, her husband being a lecturer there. When she took up the work of the Mahamandal she had become a widow. By a tragic fate, both her husband and only daughter died within a year of each other and therefore, Krishnabhabini Das had dedicated her life to the work of the Mahamandal. Though brought up in great luxury she wore coarse hand-spun cloth, and walked bare-foot through the streets of Calcutta going from door to door in her mission to win the purdah ladies of Bengal to the cause of education. Soon three centres were formed, in the North, South and Centre of the city respectively. Teachers employed by the Bharat Stri Mahamandal went either on foot or carriages hired for the purpose at the expense of the Mahamandal, to previously arranged centres where students gathered or to individual houses and gave instructions in Bengali, History, English, Geography, Arithmetic, Sewing, Handwork, Music and Singing. The Mahamandal directed the studies, fixed the curriculum and time-table of studies and took the examinations. Krishnabhabini Das made the round

of all the houses and by her inspiring and ennobling presence widened the outlook of purdah women so that petty wranglings and gossips were abandoned and the spirit of service and self-improvement was fostered. The young educated mothers sent their daughters to the girls' schools which were doing very good work. The office of the Mahamandal was situated at 4 Williams Lane, the house of Krishnabhabini Das. Women of the locality gathered here and received various kinds of instructions. The fortnightly and quarterly committee meetings of the society also took place here. The Mahamandal members organised two plays—Sat Bhai Champa and Nivedita directed by Sarala Devi for adding to the funds which received much praise from those who went to see the performances.

At the end of 1916 Krishnabhabini Das started a Widows' Home but unfortunately after her death in the beginning of 1919 the Widows' Home ceased to exist. Krishnabhabini Das was the Secretary of the society from its very inception. How keenly her death was felt can be seen from the appreciative obituary notice written by Hemlata Tagore appearing in the *Probasi*, Chaitra 1325 B.S.:

“With a heart divested of all superstition, a mind which knew not the narrow bonds of caste or creed, without any self-interest, seeking nor fame nor fruit of her actions, Krishnabhabini Das dedicated herself for the public good. With her death the women of Bengal feel homeless and orphaned. None will any more see her going from door to door of this great city. But the way shown by her will be held dear to us and will be followed by us. She was the morning star of Indian womanhood and she has introduced a new era for us. Following the path shown by her Indian women must come out of their narrow circle and learn to live for others as she did. They must feel happy at the happiness of others and sad at the sadness of others and imitate the ideal of service set up by Krishnabhabini Das. (Free translation.)

Krishnabhabini Das was succeeded by Priyamvada Devi as Secretary. Sweet-natured like her predecessor with considerable literary gifts Priyamvada Devi conducted the work of the Mahamandal creditably till 1928, when Sarala Devi Chaudhurani took the work in hand. But by now, the utility of such an organisation was exhausting itself. Sarala Devi, therefore, mainly put her effort towards starting an adult school for girls up to the Matriculation standard laying stress on handicrafts. But the eighteen years' service which the Bharat Stri Mahamandal rendered in the cause of the women of Bengal sweetened and ennobled by the shining example of Krishnabhabini Das should be gratefully remembered by them.

The Nari Siksha Samiti was started in 1919 with the following aims: (1) Establishing primary schools mainly in the villages of Bengal; (2) Opening maternity and child-welfare centres and organising mothers' classes for instruction in midwifery, child-rearing, child-training, first-aid and home-nursing; (3) Developing home-

industries by establishing a school and suitable centres for teaching arts and crafts; (4) Training women as teachers for the village schools of the Samiti as well as for other village schools; (5) Preparing suitable text-books.

In the first two years of its establishment the Samiti started several primary schools in Calcutta, two of which are now running as first-grade colleges for women—the Muralidhar College and the Beltolla College for girls. From 1921 however the Samiti devoted itself to its true object, that of starting primary schools in backward villages. In 1921 it started eight primary schools in the villages of Hugli and Howrah. In 1924 it started 14 primary schools in Dacca, Faridpur and Pabna. Up to the present 59 primary schools have been started by the Samiti though some of these have been handed to local committees. The usual procedure of the Samiti is to start schools in backward areas and when these are running well to hand them over to local committees and start new schools. A village school organiser and a lady superintendent do the work of organising and supervising these schools. The Bengal Government Reports of 1927-28, 1932-33 and 1934-35 appreciatively mention the work of the Samiti in backward and remote villages.

The Vidyasagar Bani Bhawan was started by the Nari Siksha Samiti for training widows as teachers for the primary schools in villages as the want of good women teachers in the villages was keenly felt by the Samiti in running the primary schools in the villages. Till 1935 the institution gave the students education in ordinary school subjects up to class VI as well as training in sewing, weaving, tailoring, clay-modelling, leather work and embroidery after which the students were sent to the Brahmo Girls' School Teachers' Training Department for receiving teachers' training. In 1935, however, a Junior Vernacular Teachers' Training School was added to the Bani Bhawan. At the end of the training the candidates appeared for the Junior Vernacular Training examination, after which the successful candidates served in Government recognised schools for two years before receiving their certificates. From the report of the Nari Siksha Samiti 1949-50 we find that up to date there have been 419 admissions to the institution of whom 380 completed the training given in the institution. From 1935 the Vidyasagar Bani Bhawan Training School has trained 152 teachers. When we find that there are altogether 1200 vernacular trained teachers in the whole province, this is a substantial contribution made by any one institution.

In appreciation of the work done by the Samiti the Raja of Jhargram donated 25 bighas of land and Rupees 1,000 for starting a residential Widows' Home at Jhargram in 1940. This enabled the

society to remove the Vidyasagar Bani Bhawan to a village surrounding which was much needed for giving proper training to village teachers. The activities of the Widows' Home now include gardening, dairy-work and sericulture.

The Mahila Silpa Bhawan started by the Samiti is an adult school for women, married, unmarried and widows for giving training in cottage industries though general education till class IV is also given. The same industries are taught as in the Bani Bhawan. We are told in the above report that two hundred former students of the institution are working as handwork teachers in schools or earning their living by means of cottage industries.

Adult Primary Education Centre. An endowment of a lakh of rupees was left by Sir J. C. Bose and this was entitled Sister Nivedita Women's Education Fund for the purpose of spreading education among adult women in Bengal. The syllabus for these training centres includes: (1) General training up to the primary standard; (2) Industrial education; (3) First-aid home nursing, *dai* training and child welfare; (4) Elementary training in kitchen gardening. The general and industrial training centre in Rajpur started in 1938 is still running efficiently. Other centres started in East Bengal are no longer working due to the partition. Work in connection with midwifery and child-welfare was undertaken in Palong, Bilaskhan, Domsar where 13,25, and 22 women respectively were trained. It is a pity that with funds at its disposal this very useful work is not being done in systematic way with greater efficiency.

Before ending we must speak of the guiding spirit of the institution as well as its founder, to whose constructive ability and on whose selfless and tireless work have been built the various institutions of the Nari Siksha Samiti. Lady Abala Bose, the wife of the great scientist Sir J. C. Bose and daughter of the tireless and indomitable social worker Durgamohan Das to whom women of Bengal owe much, is now over eighty years.* She has not only given birth to the institution but has looked after its day-to-day needs since its very inception nurturing it with the tenderest care. Lady Bose has never sought the limelight and being a practical idealist, a rare phenomenon, has been more keen on the perfection of her organisation than on publicity. With greater help and sympathy from the Government and the public, we have no doubt, the Bani Bhawan now placed in excellent rural surroundings, which has for long years been giving a combination of general education and training in handicrafts to the village teachers it has been training, (the importance of which is only recently being

* Since this was written Lady Bose passed away on 25th April 1951.

recognised), could be made the reservoir from which hundreds of primary schools and adult education centres could be fed and supplied with the right type of teachers for the village schools.

The Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Association was started on the 23rd of February by Mr. Gurusaday Dutt after the death of his wife Saroj Nalini, a woman of simple charm and great sincerity with an ardent desire to improve the condition of the women of Bengal, specially in the villages. We have seen that ever since the Bhagalpur and other Brahmika Somajes in the districts were started, there were growing up women's organisations in the district and sub-divisional towns. Srimati Saroj Nalini Dutt was herself instrumental in starting Mahila Samitis and when she went to England and saw the good work being done by the Women's Institutes she desired to start a central organisation which could direct and co-ordinate as well as help in maintaining the Mahila Samitis started in the villages. Death however intervened but her loving husband, the founder of the Bratachari movement, with a wonderful power of throwing himself heart and soul into any good work, carried out her ideas with signal success.

In the early days of the Association, with Gurusaday Dutt and Rai Bahadur A. C. Bannerjee were associated Mrs. Kumudini Bose, a pioneer in various types of social work, Mrs. Hemlata Tagore who so ably conducted the *Bangalakshmi Patrika*, the organ of the Association and the writer of the present article. It is in the work of the Association which took her to the villages that the author gained her experience of the real needs of the villages of Bengal and learnt to probe and utilise the deep strength and tenacious fortitude latent in the women who were still attached to the soil of their native villages, so that at the call of the country through her instrumentality these women picketed bazaars and with children in their arms stood unperturbed as policemen with lathies dashed in breaking up prohibited meetings or faced policemen with revolvers in their hands, putting up with untold humiliations whilst revolutionaries made their escape. It is they who went smilingly to prison for it is remarkable that with the exception of a few leaders it is these women who formed the rank and file of the political movement. Today if their productive power is utilised through training and organisation of women's agricultural and industrial co-operatives in the villages (bringing them to the towns defeats the very purpose for which the training is given) we are sure that they would contribute largely to the prosperity of the country.

In order to co-ordinate the activities of the Mahila Samitis the Association made the following recommendations of the work to be undertaken by them :

- (1) Industrial training in the following subjects—sewing and cutting, weaving, carpet-weaving, embroidery, knitting both by hand and by hand machines, toy-making, spinning, drawing and painting, use of by-products and waste-material, engraving and enamelling, leather embossing, etc.
- (2) Adult education classes for removing illiteracy, talks and magic lantern lectures on various instructive subjects.
- (3) Public health work by distribution of vernacular booklets on hygiene, sanitation, food values, infectious diseases as well as delivering lantern lectures on the same subjects.
- (4) Maternity welfare work through the organisation of Maternity Homes, Baby Clinics, Dai Training Classes and dissemination of up-to-date ideas about the care of the mother and child.
- (5) Running kitchen gardens on co-operative lines and sale of industrial products of the members.

The efforts of the Saroj Nalini Dutt Association were rewarded by the rapid spread of the movement for organisation of Mahila Samitis. In 1925 there were 23 Mahila Samitis affiliated to the central organisation but in 1929 these rose to 159. A quotation from an article by Marie E. H. Makie in the *Agricultural Journal of India*, Volume 24, Part I, January 1929, will give some idea of the good work being done by the Samitis. "The Samitis have made the lives of the women of Bengal happier, more hopeful and more useful than it was three years ago. A new social life has made its appearance and meetings, lectures, classes, study-groups, domestic and cottage industries have come to form so important a part of every Mahila Samiti that a Mahila Samiti can be truly described as a real educational centre for the rebuilding of national life."

How widespread was this movement can be seen from the chart of Mahila Samitis affiliated to the central organisation just before the partition :

Mymensingh—9, Midnapore—5, 24-Perganas—23, Murshidabad—7, Darjeeling—4, Noakhali—5, Ranchi—2, Madhupur—2, Burmah—2, Dacca—16, Burdwan—4, Calcutta—14, Sylhet—5, Barisal—52, Chittagong—3, Purnea—4, Rungpore—8, Khulna—22, Hughly—10, Faridpur—63, Bankura—3, Nadia—9, Rajshahi—2, Malda—2, Chandradharpur—2, Howrah—58, Birbhum—10, Bogra—10, Dinajpur—2, Jessore—22, Pabna—23, Jalpaiguri—4, Tipperah—3, Assam—5, Cooch-Bihar—1.

Saroj Nalini Industrial School. This school was founded in 1925

with the following objects: (1) To train instructresses who were to be sent to the different Mahila Samitis; (2) To provide a complete course of practical training for adult women, specially widows and women in distressed circumstances. The good work done by this school can be seen from the chart of the women who each year passed out from this institution:

1925—7, 1926—10, 1927—24, 1928—26, 1929—30, 1930—40, 1931—35, 1932—37, 1933—42, 1934—45, 1935—40, 1936—42, 1937—48, 1938—44, 1939—40, 1940—38, 1941—35, 1942—20, 1943—18, 1944—12, 1945—40, 1946—35, 1947—29, 1948—15.

Lady Brabourne Sewing Diploma Course. This course was recently started by the Association as an evening training course for those women who wanted to appear for this examination.

Junior Teachers' Training School. This school is housed in the same building as the Industrial School. Women who have studied to class VI of any school are admitted to this course. Every year a fair number of girls and women are trained in this school. Attached to this school is a free primary school where teachers of the Training School do their practical teaching. In 1949 we find that 55 trainees were resident in the hostel.

The *Banga Lakshmi*, the organ of the Association, was started in 1925 chiefly for the members of the Samitis. The journal is of practical interest to women being purely a women's journal. Since November 1927 it has been capably edited by Srimati Hemlata Tagore, the two previous editors for short periods having been Mrs. Kumudini Bose and the writer of the article.

Bengal Women's Educational League. This organisation was the outcome of the Bengal Women's Educational Conference held in Calcutta from the 16th to the 19th of February 1927. The Association of British University Women in India at a meeting held on the 29th October 1926 appointed a special committee of its members which met on the 22nd November and decided to convene a conference. The aim of the Conference was to produce a constructive programme of educational work as well as to criticise the existing system and voice the dissatisfaction it has engendered. The enthusiasm and tact of Mrs. Lindsay, wife of the then Educational Secretary of the Government of Bengal, was not a little responsible for the success of the Conference. The personnel of the committee who convened the Conference were as follows:

Miss G. N. Wright, Principal of the Bethune College, Lady J. C. Bose, Mrs. P. K. Roy, Mrs. R. S. Hossain, Mrs. P. Chowdhury, Miss C. Sorabji, Mrs. B. L. Mitter, Mrs. Bannerjee, Miss Hridoybala Bose,

Inspectress of Schools, Presidency Division and Burdwan, Miss N. Ghose, Begum Sakina Muwayyidzada, the author of the article, then Secretary, Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Association, Mrs. Mehta, Sister Caroline Elizabeth, Principal Diocessan College, Miss Theodora Wright, Miss Hogg, Miss Rivett, Miss Taylor, Miss Plumbe, and Mrs. Lindsay who was also the Secretary.

The Conference was held in the Y.W.C.A. For the first three days papers were read and resolutions were passed on the following subjects:

16th February. (1) The present state of primary education in Bengal and suggested methods in bringing it within the reach of every child—speakers: Lady Bose and Miss Baker. (2) The scope of the curriculum of a primary school—speakers: Miss Shome and Mrs. Hossain. (3) The representation of women on Administrative Bodies—speakers: Mrs. Kumudini Bose and Mrs. Renuka Roy. (4) Careers open to educated women in Bengal—speaker: Miss Hawkins.

17th February. The scope of the curriculum of the secondary school—speakers: Mrs. P. K. Roy, Miss Rivett. (2) The home and its relation to the school and University—speakers: The author of the article and Begum Sakina Muwayyidzada. (3) The training of teachers—speakers: Miss M. Ghose and Miss S. Ghose. (4) How to make the teaching profession attractive—speakers: Miss H. Sen and Miss N. Ghose.

18th February. (1) Essentials of academic education—speakers: Mrs. Rajkumari Das and Miss Theodora Wright. (2) Religion in the schools and Universities—speakers: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Miss Helen Rowlands. (3) Physical Training and Medical Inspections in schools—speakers: Miss Carswell, Dr. Miss Bose and Dr. G. Stapleton. (3) Art and handwork in schools—speakers: Mrs. Percy Brown, Miss Heanley and Miss Taylor.

The presidents on the respective days were Lady Bose and Mrs. P. K. Roy, Miss G. M. Wright and Mrs. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Dr. Stella Kramrisch.

Since 1927 annual conferences are being held by the Bengal Women's Educational League. A standing permission of the Government has been procured to allow the teachers of schools, both in the mofussil and in Calcutta, to attend its sessions. Not only are papers read but lively discussions are held on the various educational problems and there is much useful interchange of views. Instructive lectures are also held under its auspices during the year. A very useful feature of the Conference is the handwork exhibition which is held in this connection to which exhibits are sent by all schools. These exhibits are instructive and help the schools to profit from one another.

The work of the Conference chiefly relates to primary and secondary education and the Bengal Women's Education League has earned the recognition of the Government as the only women's organisation that can speak for the girls' schools of Bengal, both primary and secondary. By restricting itself to education and not allowing itself to be deviated from it, it has been able to do solid work in its own line, quietly and steadily. On all questions relating to girls' education the League is consulted by Government.

All-India Women's Conference. This organisation which is today the foremost and most influential women's organisation in India, having an all-India character, and including in its scope of activity, the entire well-being of women in all spheres, started as an All-India women's body specially interested in education. Though the genesis of the organisation may be traced to some remarks made by Mr. Oaten, the then Director of Public Instruction at the prize-distribution ceremony of the Bethune College, Calcutta, in 1926, the actual call for holding a conference came from Madras, made by Mrs. Margaret Cousins, wife of Dr. James Cousins, an Irish poet belonging to the school of Celtic Revival who with his wife had devoted his life to the promotion of Indian education and culture in connection with the Theosophical Society. Mrs. Cousins was in a particularly favoured position for calling such an All-India Women's Conference as she was the founder-Secretary of the Women's Indian Association with 65 branches all over India and was editor of *Stri-Dharma*, a bi-lingual women's journal. Mrs. Cousins was also a woman of great social charm, with contacts in all the provinces, who had steeped herself in Indian culture and had identified herself with Indian women.

The following letter signed by Mrs. Cousins was circulated to prominent women as well as women's organisations all over India :

"There is undoubtedly a need for women to express their considered views clearly on the subject of present-day education for boys and girls in India, and specially for girls. If these opinions are formulated in a memorandum women will be doing a service to the future and be helping those who are at present in charge of the educational destinies of young India.

The following seems to me the most practicable way in which to collect the assistance of women to this end, and I write to you to co-operate with women in all parts of India in bringing the project to success and to write and tell me your opinion on the scheme and whether we may count on your active support.

As problems connected with girls' education are different in different provinces and localities it is thought necessary that there should be Women's Conferences on Educational Reforms in each province and in clearly defined districts which will formulate local solutions and will also give views which would be All-Indian as well. From each of these conferences representatives should be elected who will attend an All-Indian Conference which may take place in Poona at the end of December next or at the end of January. This conference of representatives consisting of forty or

fifty women will have the duty of synthesising from the proceedings of the preliminary constituent conferences an authoritative and representative memorandum by women on educational reform which will be published widely and sent to all the Indian educational authorities.''

The response from Bengal busy with organising the Bengal Women's Educational League was at first not very encouraging. Mrs. Cousins regretted the fact to the author of this article when she was passing through Madras on her way back from England *via* Colombo. At the request of Mrs. Cousins the author saw all the prominent women educationists of Bengal and published an appeal in *The Statesman*. As a result of her efforts a conference was held in the Ram-mohan Library Hall under the presidentship of Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj in which resolutions were passed and delegates were appointed. It was in the fitness of things that Mrs. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani who was the first Indian woman to conceive of such an all-India organization of women, for asserting themselves in educational matters through the organisation of the Bharat Stri Mahamandal, mention of which has been made earlier, was elected to lead the Bengal delegates to the Conference, which was held at Poona. It is to the credit of Bengal that amongst the recommendations made at the Calcutta conference the following important recommendations, whose soundness has since been acknowledged, were made. In the sphere of primary education it was recommended that, handwork, manual training and domestic science which can lead on to vocational training, should be taught and the dignity of labour be emphasised. Training of the senses should be combined with literacy. In the sphere of secondary education it was recommended that the school course should not be narrowed down to the mere passing of the Matriculation examination but there should be a broadening of both the curriculum and the scope of the subjects. In the sphere of college education it was recommended that the college course should include social-service, journalism, politics as a practical science, and that women's colleges should not be mere lecture-halls but the centre of an active corporate life.

The first conference at Poona created great enthusiasm and the opening was a colourful ceremony as may be seen from the following account:

"To realise the effect of the All-Indian Women's Conference one must visualise the intellectual background of the city of Poona famous in its acquirement of knowledge. One must also visualise at the opening ceremony the presence of 2000 people in the dignified N. M. Amphitheatre Hall of the Fergusson College. Rows of young men students in the top gallery, hundreds of women students in the lower gallery, the body of the hall filled full with delegates from all parts of India, with members of the reception committee and with men and women teachers, professors and prominent citizens of Poona. On the platform were grouped about their royal leader,

those women, Hindu, Mussulman, Parsi, Christian, and Western, on whose shoulders lay the chief burden of responsibility for expressing woman's self-conscious vision of literate India, redeemed from the disgrace of the present two per cent literacy of womanhood and the fourteen per cent literacy of manhood. One felt awakening, spring, promise in the air. The discussion sessions of the following days gave achievement in formulation of the memorandum and the closing session fused the women, young and old, into a spiritual sisterhood, fused and sent forth to turn their vision into accomplishment and to embody their general principles into a detailed system in a new educational and social era."

A memorandum was drawn up stressing that (1) education should develop the child's latent capacities to their fullest extent for the service of humanity and must include physical, mental, emotional and civic development. That in the secondary schools there should be alternative courses in domestic science, fine arts, handicrafts, and industries. In colleges the following optional courses should be included in the curricula: Fine arts, advanced domestic science, journalism, social science and architecture. Scholarships should be given to attract women students to take up law, medicine, social-sciences and architecture.

The only resolution of a general social nature was the support of Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda's Bill for the restraint of early marriage. In the *Second All-India Women's Educational Conference*, however, we find interest more and more centering on social reform for women and the main interest of the Conference revolved round the Sarda Bill. In the *Third Conference* at Patna in 1929 the scope of the Conference was definitely widened to include social reform and a separate committee was appointed for the purpose, and in the *Fourth Conference* it was found that this committee did very good work conducting a countrywide agitation for the reform of laws of inheritance of women. In this connection we find that a meeting was held in Calcutta under the joint auspices of all the women's organisations which was presided over by the poetess Mrs. Kamini Roy, and attended amongst others by many Marwari ladies of Calcutta. The following resolution proposed by Mrs. Aparna Roy, (elder daughter of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das) and seconded by Mrs. Saudamini Mehta was passed:

"This meeting of the women of Calcutta supports the principle of Hindu Women's Rights of Inheritance Bill as a step towards restoration of original and just rights of Hindu women over inherited properties under Hindu Law."

The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Conferences show the organisation busy over studying the conditions of women labour, safeguarding the Sarda Act from amendments which would nullify it, and interesting itself in putting on the statute-book in Baroda a Divorce Act

for Hindus, as well as in lifting its self-imposed ban on politics, allowing the Conference to take part in constitutional politics. It adopted a memorandum conjointly drawn up by the All-India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association, and the National Council of Women in India to be placed before the Franchise Committee of the Round Table Conference, whilst a deputation of women on its behalf waited on the Viceroy which demanded that women be represented in the Round Table Conference. The *Seventh Conference* shows that nine members of the All-India Women's Conference gave evidence before the Indian Franchise Committee at various centres, but its most notable work in the educational field was the opening of the Lady Irwin College for women in Delhi to teach Domestic Science and train teachers in Domestic Science. The *Eighth Conference* shows that three women representatives from the All-India Women's Conference, the Indian Women's Association and the National Council of Women were invited to London to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. This created an opportunity for many contacts that the delegates made with organisations of other countries.

The *Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Conferences* record (a) a successful effort to create a widespread demand for the appointment of a commission on the legal disabilities of women which would suggest reforms in the light of modern conditions, (b) the compilation of a report on the conditions of women labour in mines suggesting the elimination of women from underground work, (c) the submission of a memorandum on political, social, and educational status of women in India to the League of Nations and the Government of India. The *Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Conferences* show the preparation of a programme of legislation for improving the social status of women and its forwarding to the Prime Ministers of the new provincial governments. During this period were also instituted the regular issues of bulletins by the Conference with two special bulletins published on education and health. Later other bulletins were published. During the year 1938 the A.I.W.C. started its organ *Roshani*. We also see the developments of foreign contacts not only by the presence of distinguished foreign visitors at its thirteenth session but also by the appointment of a *liaison* officer for South Africa.

During the *Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Conferences* it is reported that the Bombay branch is conducting 30 adult education classes and receiving a grant of Rs. 500 a month from the Bombay Municipality. It is also reported that the questionnaire on Hindu Law was receiving

the serious attention of the members of the A.I.W.C. Mrs. Renuka Roy was nominated as representative of the A.I.W.C. to the Central Legislative Assembly during the pendency of the Intestate Succession and Marriage Bills. During this period we find the organisation taking up seriously social and philanthropic work. The Bengal Famine took place in 1943 and Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pundit as President of the organisation and Mrs. Kulsum Sayani as the Secretary toured the affected areas. Branches were opened in Calcutta and the districts for the relief of the distressed women. In this connection it must be mentioned that the Mahila Atma Rakshma Samiti, an extremist leftist organisation, did great work amongst the really poor and needy. Milk centres for infants, nursing mothers, gruel kitchens, and medical relief were organised by the A.I.W.C. Rs. 60,000 was raised by all the branches and given to the Bengal Branch. A Central fund called the "Save the Children Fund" was also started, with Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pundit as the President, Mrs. Urmila Mehta as the Secretary, and Shri Nalini Ranjan Sarkar as the Treasurer. In response to an appeal made by the President, large sums of money were received from China, America and Britain.

The war, riots and the partition of India had their effects and the organisation has had to concentrate more on social and philanthropic work. The organisation has done good work in connection with the Noakhali riots, some of its members working at Noakhali. It has also done much in connection with the refugee problem, along with other women's organisations, both in Delhi and Calcutta.

The most important work of the Conference in Independent India is the effort it is making to get the Hindu Code Bill passed with its provisions for monogamous marriages, divorce and property rights for Hindu women. Not only have the members been able to win the powerful support of the Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru but it has marshalled all the progressive opinion in India in support of the measure. If passed the Bill will have a considerable effect on Hindu Society and its age-old structure.

The Bengal Branch. From the starting of the organisation Bengal took an active share in its work. Mrs. P. K. Roy presided over the Madras session of the Conference. Mrs. Renuka Roy has been throughout the most active member in trying to get progressive legislation, in connection with women, passed, and was in consequence elected as the representative of the Conference to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1944. She is still carrying on her endeavour in the Parliament of Independent India to get the Hindu Code Bill passed. Mrs. S. C. Mukherjee who is one

of the Ex-Chairwomen of the Standing Committee of the Conference was appointed by the Government of India as Indian Delegate to the Conference of the Central Authorities of the League of Nations in Eastern Countries. Unfortunately we get no separate reports of the work done in Bengal annually. Only occasional reports seem to have been published. From a report published in 1937 we find that the Bengal branch was responsible for arranging a refresher course for primary teachers every month and that nine such lectures were delivered together with four lectures on the evils of the dowry system, the amendments needed in the Sarda Act, the work of the Calcutta Constituency of the A.I.W.C. and the Dum Dum Rescue Home, its origin and work. We also find the Calcutta branch successful in its attempt to apportion part of the Deshbandhu Park for women and children. The Bengal branch did good work in connection with rousing women to the need for various legislations in connection with women, *e.g.*, suppression of Immoral Traffic Act for women and children and Hindu women's right over property. We also find mention of a night school for depressed class men and women which seems to have been running since 1933. Later reports show that the school is still being conducted and is receiving a grant from the Corporation and is allowed to make use of the premises of one of the Corporation Primary Schools. A Harijan Bal-Mandir was started and has been running since about 1936. It renders service to children in *bustees* who are bathed there and given a cup of milk. The Committee of the Bal-Mandir also visit *bustees* to encourage cleanliness and teach the mothers laws of health and hygiene. The Calcutta Corporation gives it a grant of Rs. 1,500 annually.

The most important work of the Bengal branch is, however, in connection with refugee relief and rehabilitation. The actual work was started both in North and South Calcutta during the worst days in August 1946. The Relief and Rehabilitation Committee of the A.I.W.C., which came into existence during the 1943 famine, started to function with renewed vigour during September 1946, and since then it has worked consistently in Calcutta during the most troublesome days in Noakhali and Tipperah. Even as early as January 1947 it decided to lay emphasis on rehabilitation work. The most important work was done in three villages in Lakshmipur thana in Noakhali district, and in Char Krishnapur and other areas round Haimchar in Chandpur sub-division. In Calcutta a training centre was set up in 8 Bethune Row, Government paying the house-rent. But the need was felt for residential accommodation as refugees began pouring into India after partition. Accommodation for a

hundred trainees at Government expense was secured at 10 Nalin Sarkar Street. Government also paid the cost of each trainee at Rs. 18 per head. Later accommodation was also secured at 68 Vivekananda Road for 200 more refugees. The crafts taught at the North Centre are: tailoring, embroidery, knitting, dyeing, laundry, cooking, book-binding and watch-repairing. Besides, the Centre trains children's teachers and infant nurses, gives elementary training in nursing to fit candidates for care of the sick and the old. It also trains women to become sales-women and canteen-helpers. It is quite evident that these last subjects are taught in an elementary way as the Centre cannot offer the opportunities and equipment for detailed training in these subjects.

The South Calcutta Centre is not residential but trains candidates in the following subjects: handloom weaving, embroidery, spinning, knitting, dyeing, sewing, and the finishing of textiles.

A new Centre has been started at 17 Lord Sinha Road at which Hindi classes are held. Many teachers have joined these classes. It also gives training in games and physical exercises.

The A.I.W.C. is undoubtedly the most important and progressive of all the women's organisations. It is, however, confined to progressive and educated women, and its entirely Western outlook divorces it from the national and cultural ideals of India. By its outlook it is separated from the rank and file of Indian women as well as from the masses of the country. Something more than philanthropy is needed to establish this contact. The political movement brought out the best in Indian women encouraging heroism, self-sacrifice and deep patriotism and love of the country. But the A.I.W.C. by stressing rights and demands of women, is helping to disintegrate more quickly those ideals of gentleness, service and self-sacrifice which were the noble ideals the suppressed and much suffering women of India strove for and which orthodox Hinduism encouraged in Hindu women because it was a higher and nobler ideal. It is a pity that neither the modern educational system nor the women's movements have been able to preserve these ideals and to give them larger fields of expression than before. Women through the influence of the present-day educational system and women's organisations, such as the A.I.W.C., are becoming more individualistic, but individualism only finds its finer expression when it realises itself in something higher than itself, and through such action widens itself. We do not deny that organisations like the A.I.W.C. are trying to develop the social consciousness of women but if in doing so they cut at the root of the happiness of the home and the more spiritual qualities of Indian womanhood, is the increased efficiency

of women in society worth the price, 'what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

All-Bengal Women's Union. When an appeal was made by the promoters of the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Bill 1932 to the women of Bengal to help in arousing public opinion in its favour the Central Committee of the Bengal Presidency Council of Women appointed a sub-committee to undertake the work. Later this sub-committee was transformed into a separate organisation, the All-Bengal Women's Union. The main aim of the association was the abolition of commercialised vice and of the exploitation and contamination of women and young persons. The membership of the Union was open to women of all races and creeds. It was also proposed to have an after-care home for women. Already at Panihati the Government had a Rescue Home for minor girls, called the Govinda Kumar Home, to take care of girls rescued by the police. But it was meant only for minor girls. The rehabilitation of these girls when they attained the age of majority as well as of abducted and enticed women was undertaken by the new organisation. The All-Bengal Women's Union was in fact the first independent and conscious effort of Indian Women to help their more unfortunate sisters who would become social outcasts and be driven to a life of shame if timely help was not rendered.

In the first six months of its existence the Association held several public meetings, the largest at Albert Hall at which resolutions were passed supporting the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Bill and demanding that government should take immediate steps to prevent the operations of those enemies of society who dealt in immoral traffic of women. It sent a questionnaire to all important societies and individuals for eliciting support for the bill. The Association also sought ways and means for opening the after-care extension of the Panihati scheme.

The 1933-34 report shows that the proposed after-care Home under the name of "All-Bengal Women's Industrial Institute" was started at 8, Dum Dum Cantonment in November, 1933, with a lady Superintendent and five girls as well as a weaving master. General education, needle-work, making jams, sweets and pickles, gardening and weaving formed the main subjects of the curriculum. Visiting members also taught the girls basket making, pottery work, book binding, and stamped leather-work.

From the report of 1934-35 it is seen the Union was making enquiries at the various police-courts in Calcutta to find out if any immoral traffic cases had been instituted. But the reply was negative. It also urged the Government for amendment of Section 3 (1) of the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act. For the

furtherance of its aims a meeting was held at the Albert Hall jointly with the Bengal Presidency Council of Women and the Calcutta Constituency of the All-India Women's Conference on the 20th August 1934. We also see the curriculum of the Home extended to include all school subjects while retaining its industrial bias. The report of 1935-36 shows that the Union formed two special sub-committees, one to give wider publicity to the work of the Union, and the other to enquire into existing social conditions and the possibility of training a whole time social worker for rescue work. Funds were raised by a car-affle and the rules of the Industrial Home amended so as to provide for admitting girls direct from brothels and girls of 14 years and upwards. The report of 1936-37 is not available but the report of 1938-39 shows the Union actively interesting itself in the support of a Bill for amending the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act introduced by Mr. Nurul Ahmed. An amendment committee was formed with Mrs. S. C. Mukerjee as convener. The committee met and drew up a list of amendments which were passed at a public meeting. The committee held that unless brothel-keeping was made illegal by legislation it meant that the Government was supporting the trade. Its chief emphasis was laid on the deletion of the words "for gain of any other person", as the inclusion of the words rendered the whole act a farce for though it was well known that the majority of prostitutes were exploited by some other person it was difficult to give legal evidence. It also pressed for authority to be given to the police in making complaint under Section 4, as well as for taking away the child from a prostitute mother at the age of three.

The Home managed by the Union was getting on well. There were 18 inmates and ten other inmates were receiving training in different institutions under the guardianship of the Home. Five of these ten girls were taking Nurse's training in the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan and were reported to be doing well having qualified for stipends, two were taking Teacher's Training at the Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial School, two girls after taking Industrial Training at the Bani Bhawan had joined their Industrial Co-operative while one was studying at the Sishu Vidyapith at the cost of the Home. We see also that the cheerfulness of the girls was a main consideration and that they were taken out for excursions and encouraged to celebrate the different Hindu festivals. Thus we see that the Home was already trying for the rehabilitation of the inmates in various honourable professions.

The Second World War seems to have had an adverse effect on the work of the Union. The premises of the Home were requisitioned by the Government so that the inmates had to be sent to other institu-

tions that kindly received them and the Home had to be closed down. There are no reports for this period. The report of 1944-46, however, gives some account of the work done in 1943-45. We find that through the efforts of the Union a combined meeting of the All-India Women's Conference, the Bengal Presidency Council of Women, The Women's Protection League, and some other women's organisation was held in July 1944 and another in May 1945 under the Presidency of Dr. Radha Binode Pal and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu respectively in both of which it was urged that the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act which still remained almost a dead letter should be suitably amended to make it workable. The Union also got the permission of the Police Commissioner to organise Women Patrols but found it difficult for private organisations to put the scheme in practice. The Union was, however, successful in its efforts to suppress brothels and by 1946 most of these had been closed down. Meanwhile, the Industrial Institute had been reopened at 15, Dover Road in May 1944. We see that primary classes and industrial training had again been started and that the inmates were receiving preliminary training before they were being sent to other institutions for professional training. We also note that four marriages had been arranged by the authorities of the Home.

The report of 1947-49 shows the work of the Home enlarged from the time of the famine of 1943 when the Home had been forced to admit destitute women and children. The communal riots and the Partition of Bengal brought additional refugees to the Home. Through the good offices of Mr. Niharendu Dutt Majumdar, the premises at 89 Elliot Road were handed over to the Home free of rent for the housing of destitute women. It appears that in 1949 there were 120 women and children in the Home, with three sections, an orphans section, a training section, where training in needle-work, weaving, charkha, home-nursing, cooking, domestic work, gardening, training as children's attendants and vaccination training is given, and an independent section, where women who support themselves by outdoor work live. The Home has been able to do this useful work because it was receiving in addition to Rs. 18/- per trainee per month, a recurring grant of Rs. 250/- per month from the Industries Department, and Rs. 75/- per month from the Education Department.

From the report of 1947-49 it is also evident that in 1948 several meetings were held in the office of the Commissioner of Police in which the Union and other women's organisations participated and the question was taken up as to whether there should be licensing and regulation of prostitutes or the abolition of brothels. The

members of the Union along with the majority of those present wholeheartedly stood for abolition of brothels with the result that brothels have not got State recognition. It appears that the Union took an active part in the initiative for having women police. The Union is also pressing the Government to employ two trained social workers for rescue work.

The work of the Bengal Women's Union is indeed one in which women can do much. The Hon. Mrs. Sushil Sinha has been prominently associated with the Union from its inception and is one whose sweet and motherly influence the inmates of the Home have felt all along. Many English women devoted much of their time and energy to the work. Mrs. S. C. Mukerjee, Mrs. N. C. Sen and others have also shown their active interest. The Union has now a band of devoted women workers who go regularly to the Home and help in various ways.

CONCLUSION

A century and a quarter's work for and by women in the cause of women have been recorded above. An age has gone and a new age is beginning both for India and the world. For India freedom from British Rule and India's position as one of the free nation's of the world specially calls for a revision of her outlook, and a reorientation of her method of work.

The background of British rule in India has been enormously significant in giving to the emancipation of Indian women a Western turn. Rammohun Roy, when he pleaded for the emancipation of Indian women, had in view the restoration of the social position which women in ancient India enjoyed. Keshub Chunder Sen with all his reformist ardour clung to the ideal of Aryan womanhood. Swami Vivekananda wished that Indian women should get the best that the West had to give them without losing their spiritual heritage. Swarnakumari Devi, Hiranmoyee Devi, Sarala Devi, Krishnabhabini Das and Lady Abala Bose tried to preserve the innate qualities and traditions of the Bengali women in the institutions of which they were founders and to which they gave their life-long service. Preservation is, however, only possible for a while and under favourable circumstances. But the education of girls on Western lines on the same pattern as that of boys and the iconoclastic forces of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj swept aside all past tradition. The only constructive force which still worked for the cultural heritage of India was nationalism and the cultural revival in art, craft and literature centring round the Tagore family and powerfully helped by Sister Nivedita.

We cannot, however, undervalue the work done by the social and educational movements of the last century and a quarter. It freed

woman from the shackles which bound her and limited her sphere of utility. Western education has been particularly valuable in freeing women from social rigidities and medieval superstitions. The way is now clear for a new flowering. But Western education has also imposed new ideologies and codes of moral conduct transplanted from Victorian England and Christianity. The question of marriage, divorce, property rights of women should be considered in reference to the social structure already in existence in India or that which we desire to bring into being. A blind imitation of the West is not desirable nor is haste indicated though we are all for courage in initiating innovations which will build for the future. Women's position in the new world and in new India will require perhaps more radical reforms than that envisaged by Victorian England.

The social work which women have done up to now is more in the nature of philanthropy and its aim is individual relief. It is a fact, however, that philanthropy degrades the recipient by inflicting a sense of humiliation, which all those who receive help invariably feel, breeding unhealthy psychological reactions, and creates in those rendering service a smug self-satisfaction which stands in the way of all spiritual progress. The social work which is demanded today is one which instead of giving stray individual relief will build up new social patterns which will eliminate the social ills to which we are victims and relief to the individual will come as a corollary. In a democracy like India it is to be hoped that the social patterns represented will be the rich expression of diversified individual genius and will not conform to one unified soul-less central pattern, though all should work in harmony to give expression to that which is the highest in human nature.

It would be vain today to revive the past, but moral and spiritual values belong to no age and the greatness and richness of ancient India lay in her moral and spiritual stature. By reviving an outdated social setting out of tune with the modern world these values cannot be recaptured. But selflessness and courage both in bearing and daring, fidelity, nobility, wisdom, generosity are qualities which Indian women can still cultivate and by practice impress them on their environment. If, however, we want to cultivate them the emphasis must be laid in being and not doing. It must be remembered that whatever institution we work in or build takes the stamp of what we are. In its restless hurry to do, the West has forgotten this great truth. The soul needs silence and quietude for development and practice for perfection. If we are always in a sick hurry where is the time for self-perfection. Social workers must remember that without this striving they will be building on sand.

IN THE PRESENT CRISIS*

Dr. Radhabinode Pal

We are passing through an age of transition and the events are moving so fast that even the most sanguine mind ventures not to base any hopes on things happening. In this changing world adjustment has become the greatest of all problems. The present and the future equally confront us with baffling challenges. Our very existence in the future world will depend upon what response we can offer to these challenges.

These problems have almost become too big for men to understand, and the gravest danger is that, when this happens, our actions are likely to cease to be governed by the higher controlling mechanisms of our conscious minds; the unconscious is likely to resume its sway. But in the present-day world we can hardly afford to depend on mere unconscious impulses. We can no longer deny the ideas and conscious motivations their proper place. Of course, this must not be taken as a recommendation of mere addition of more words: we are already in a world submerged in an inflation of words and meaningless symbols. Nor is it a recommendation of that philosophy which is only to be "a device for making it possible to do, coolly, continuously and with a good conscience, things which otherwise one could do only in the heat of passion, spasmodically and under the threat of subsequent remorse."

Throughout the world now a war is going on, a war of ideas and of ideological doctrines in which race and nationalism play not a mean role. This war can only be won if we have constructive ideas, not only ideas in the abstract, but ideas helping the real inner reconstruction. We are to see how these conflicting national or cultural ideas can best be related. In attempting this we must avoid all insistence on the divergences in mind and ideology. Such insistence is only apt to detract attention from the vital problems and to magnify the situation for a particular period arising under particular circumstances into something absolute. We must remember in this connection that "deification of race, or the nation, now so prevalent in the Western world, is a serious and destructive form of idolatry. To read eternal qualities into things so utterly temporal is only a

*Address delivered by the author on the opening day of the Bethune Centenary Celebrations as President of the Governing Body of the Bethune College and President of the Centenary Celebrations Committee.

symptom of low intellectuality." It is further to be remembered that the racial explanation of differences in human ability of achievement is a deliberate and cold blooded piece of deception in which the differentiating effects of upbringing and education are mendaciously ascribed to pre-existing differences of a racial order and this with the calculated object of producing certain effects in the practical field of social and political action.

Any change that leads to new conditions will make for a revision of habits and reorientation of expectations. But the change which is fast coming is creating an unprecedented condition. The traditionally alien cultures of the orient and the occident are meeting: the working out of this meeting in a manner which will enable the values of each civilization to complement and reinforce rather than combat and destroy those of the other should be the chief task of the epoch just ahead.

It can, I believe, be legitimately hoped that the transformations of the world which are at present taking place are leading to a world which will enlarge human capacity for struggle and achievement. The only question is, how long will the acute and difficult phases of the transition last and how much damage and set-back will occur in the process?

Whatever may happen, we should remember that everyone of us shares a responsibility for the future, everyone of us owes a loyalty to the new world. But our loyalty will be a real intelligent loyalty, our responsibility will materialize into a genuine constructive effort only if we realize the full meaning of our lives, the full significance of our endeavours and struggles, only if we keep faith in our high destiny in the coming transformation and fulfilment of human society.

I would urge the young students of this great institution here to awaken in themselves this awareness that it has been their lot to be in a completely changing world where it will be futile to try to progress simply by adjusting themselves materially. Spiritual adjustment to the new situation is essential. I would like to see in you all the readiness to see the whole situation in which you find yourselves and not only to reorientate your action on immediate tasks and purposes but to base them on a more comprehensive vision.

No doubt a society would require revitalization for any such adjustment to new circumstances. If the specific function of the youth in society is that it is such a revitalizing agent, that it is a reserve to be brought to the fore for the purpose, it is specially young women upon whom society would mostly count as the special reserve for this inner reconstruction.

You are now passing through that period of your young life in

which the mind and, still more, the moral character is in the most sensitive and receptive condition, when the intellect and the soul are still soft enough to receive, and are yet firm enough to retain, the impressions which harden into habits of thought and action. I hope the light that radiates from your *alma mater* will help you to discriminate the genuine from the spurious, that the education which you are receiving at her hand will instil in you an adequate knowledge of the forces which will shape the destiny of your nation and will prevent you from being led away by any propaganda.

I have had to make special mention of propaganda in this context since this is one of the most sinister forces that have been devised for mass control, so much so that there is hardly a world Power today which has not set up a ministry of propaganda and placed it under the direction and control of one of the ablest of its men. It is needless to say that this device has been found most effective. The terror of the efficiency of propaganda consists in the fact that by constantly playing on your emotions it can enslave you without your being aware of the change and can superimpose creeds, beliefs and behaviour which may not correspond to your real nature. Try to maintain the genuine independence of your mind and judgment.

Whatever experience you may have in life, you must meet the same with courage and sweetness. In everyone of you let the new world realize its dream of seeing the noble union of sweetness with strength, the most perfect beauty of soul. Let the new world witness your life's action and behaviour so as to be able to speak with awe of everyone of you :

“Though lovely women walk the world today
By tens of thousands, there is none so fair
In all that exhibition and display
With her most perfect beauty to compare.”

REMINISCENCES*

Tatini Das

A commemorative function of this kind is expected to allow some latitude in the matter of lapsing into a reminiscent mood and striking a personal note in an impersonal context. Straining my vision to the farthest reach of memory, I can still visualise a little girl of nine, passing under the high overhanging portico of the Bethune School and scaling the flight of steps with a reasonably timid but reassured look—for being in the tender grip of the loving father who, again, happened to be the Headmaster, at that time, of the School. The girl in question glided along the School, and later the Collegiate stage for an unbroken period of ten years that covered the entire expanse of her academic career leading to graduation—without forsaking her dear, old, although unresourceful *alma mater*, in the expectation of a richer harvest of academic honours. By virtue of a singular turn of events that girl of nine, with her age six times nine, stands before you at the moment! Be that as it may, an unwearied loyalty to the Institution has steadily grown upon her with the passage of time that alone can make history. By a happy accident, however, that youthful devotion found a new channel of expression, after a few years' break, through service, first as a Professor and then as the Principal for a stretch of eighteen years of closest possible association. And that association, valued as it is by her, is now about to be severed on account of the rule of super-annuation. That explains the secret of her energy and enthusiasm, interleaved with the pathos of a farewell, brought to bear on these celebrations—perhaps the last expression of life-long devotion to her *alma mater*.

Even as I stand here I can recall vividly to my mind the history of unremitting toil behind the hard-won plot of land—once a popular market-place—upon which we have assembled this afternoon and in the acquisition of which my venerable father was perhaps the prime mover. The market was demolished as far back as in 1905—to the best of my recollection—with a view to speedy construction of the College Building, which has remained unfortunately in a state of arrested development during these forty years. The College Department which had naturally evolved out of the School Department within about thirty years after the foundation of the Institution on

*Address delivered by the Principal, Bethune College, on the opening day of the Centenary Celebrations.

the 7th May, 1849, had no local habitation of its own but was being reared—in the words of the Sadler Commission Report—like the cuckoo in the nest of another bird !

When I came here as the head of the Institution it was reasonably expected that the task in this regard left unfinished by the father would be given the finishing touch by the daughter. But by a sheer irony of fate an old unplanned building, adjacent to our compound, which had been practically thrust upon us came in our way, and after many more years of privation, the College had to accept it in 1940 as a case of Hobson's choice. For the time being the idea of a planned building on this plot was given a decent burial. But being an incorrigible optimist, I still entertain the hope of witnessing in the near future as an invitee—which I could not, as the Principal—the ceremonial opening of that College Building of my vision that is befitting to the position and dignity of the First Women's College in India !

What has proved to be the never-failing source of inspiration for me all these years is the unique tradition of this Institution constituted of, and consecrated by, the sacrifice and service of J. E. D. Bethune, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Pandit Madanmohan Tarkalankar and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar of hallowed memory. Emanating, as it does, from a self-denying ordination—of heroic sacrifice and devoted service—this Institution of ours is not a mere brick-and-mortar existence but nurtures, as we believe, within itself the promise and potency of continued existence and expansion. With the reflected radiance of that "cloud of witnesses", we hope, we can face the future with calm confidence. For, as the Scriptures of all Faiths declare, *Tapas* and *Satyam*, Sacrifice and Truth, contain the secret of all creation as much as of conservation. Truth as reinforced by the Good in this creative sense is, literally speaking, the conditioning ground and fountainhead of all that happens, or acquires the right, to exist. *Sate hitam iti Satyam*—as etymology and ideology will unite in justifying the right. It is in this sense alone that we had the enlightened testimony of a Great Soul, so much before our mind at this season :

"Of late instead of saying God is Truth,

I have been saying Truth is God

Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth
we have not known."

May I close on this high-pitched key with the oracular words still ringing in our ears !

THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Dr. Saroj Kumar Das

As projected by the Centenary Celebrations Committee the "Centenary Year of the Bethune Vidyalaya" which had been inaugurated on the 7th May, 1949 on the hundredth anniversary of the Foundation Day of the Institution, with a Tree-plantation ceremony, was rounded off with a week-long programme of celebrations extending from the 28th January to the 4th February, 1950. It may be recalled here that in keeping with the solemnity of the historic occasion, the one-hundredth anniversary of the actual foundation of the Institution was celebrated on the 7th May, 1949 at 7 A.M. by way of plantation of "ASHOKA" saplings by two of the oldest living *alumni* of the Institution, under the guidance of Acharyya Kshiti Mohan Sen of Santiniketan, chanting Vedic *mantras* and the girls of the Institution singing hymns from Tagore to the accompaniment of ceremonial dances appropriate to the occasion.

Synchronising happily with the epochal event of Foundation of the Indian Republic and soaked in the spirit of a foundational ceremony, our week-long programme of celebrations started functioning as the fitting close of a festive occasion of All-India importance. The sessional programme comprised *inter alia* (i) a Pageant depicting the land-marks in Women's Education and Social Life in India from ancient times to the present day, (ii) a Display of Educational and Artistic exhibits covering a hundred years, (iii) a Symposium on Women's Education, (iv) a Musical Evening, representing the different stages and schools of music during the last hundred years, (v) a Dramatic Performance of Tagore's "*CHIRAKUMAR SABHA*" by present and past students of the College, (vi) Athletic Games and Folk Dances and (vii) a Variety Entertainment by the students of the School.

The session opened on Saturday, the 28th January, 1950 at 2 P.M. with Her Highness Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj presiding over the function and His Excellency Dr. K. N. Katju opening the Exhibition. The entire proceedings of the first part of the session on the Opening Day, from 2 to 3-30 P.M. were relayed by the All-India Radio. At 1-45 P.M. Her Highness Maharani Sucharu Devi and a little later H. E. Dr. K. N. Katju with their respective *entourage* arrived and were received at the gate by Dr. Radhabinode Pal, President, Principal Mrs. Tatini Das, Chairman and Mrs. Suprova Sen,

Secretary of the Bethune Vidyalaya Centenary Celebrations Committee. They were then conducted to the spacious Assembly Hall of the pillared building wherein had assembled one hundred past *alumni* of the Institution, along with the Lord Bishop of Calcutta and other distinguished ladies and gentlemen, invited to take part in the ceremonial procession. Facing the age-long immaculate, white-marble bust of John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune in the centre of the Hall, adorned with floral decorations, realistic as well as symbolic, against the background of that 'cloud of witnesses' typified by the portraits of Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the later band of the faithful, and inhaling the aromatic incense of a typically Oriental form of worship, the assembly was, under its mystic spell, made to realise in a telescopic review, as it were, the promise and potency of the "new tree of liberty to remind us of the bond of fellowship which unites our labours in one common cause", as visualised by Bethune on the Foundation Day. Punctually at 2 P.M. the procession of one hundred past students from the age of 86 downwards, headed by two carrying the banner of the Institution, started marching from the Hall to the accompaniment of a music played by a small band of students. Everyone in this procession of one hundred *alumni* carried a small earthen lamp, symbolizing the diffusion of knowledge among at least three generations of women students, scattered throughout the country. Then followed in the wake of these *alumni* the patrons and members of the Celebrations Committee, the honoured guests and speakers. On the choral singing of the *Bande Mātaram*, the national anthem, the day's proceedings commenced with a Vedic hymn appropriate to the occasion sung in chorus by students, followed by *Mangalācharanam* recital of benedictory hymns from the *Rigveda*. Messages of felicitation from the Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Education Minister of West Bengal and from the Hon'ble Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee of the Government of Indian Union were then read out. Thereafter followed the addresses of Dr. Radhabinod Pal, Dr. Kalidas Nag, Principal Mrs. Tatini Das, the Hon'ble Sri Charu Chandra Biswas and of Sreejukta Santa Devi. Her Highness Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj, the President, who was on that day running a temperature, delivered an *extempore* speech, which was as inspiring as it was instructive. With a feeling reference to her father, Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen, of hallowed memory, and to her elder sister, late Maharani Suniti Devi of Cooch Behar, she depicted graphically the state of women's education prevailing in their own household and their association with the Institution, during the seventies of the last century. In her characteristic way she finished her peroration on a high-pitched key, invoking

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS



MAHARANI SUCHARU DEVI OF MAYURBHANJ
General President, Centenary Celebrations



MRS. HANSA MEHTA, Vice-Chancellor,
Baroda University, President, Symposium



MRS. TATINI DAS
Principal, Bethune College (1934—1949)
Chairman, Centenary Celebrations Committee



MRS. SUPROVA SEN
Head Mistress Bethune Collegiate School,
Secretary, Centenary Celebrations Committee

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS



TREE- PLANTATION CEREMONY

Mr. Pramathanath Banerji, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University and Pandit Kshiri Mohan Sensastri are seen in the photo.

PAGEANT

A MOGHUL SCENE from the Pageant of Women's Progress from the Vedic Age to Modern Times.



Divine blessings on the Institution and those directly associated with it, on the attainment of a significant mile-stone in its onward path of progress.

The Most Rev. G. C. Hubback, the Metropolitan of India, who represented at the function the District Grand Master of the Masonic Fraternity, began by recalling the historic incident, just a century ago, when the foundation stone of this Institution was laid, the District Grand Master of the Brotherhood officiating at the ceremony. It was in the fitness of relations, therefore, that the Masonic Fraternity should be represented at the First Centenary Celebration of the Institution. Drawing upon the spiritual significance of the Foundation, although in a secular context, of the Indian Republic, the Metropolitan observed, with an intensity of emotion that could hardly fail of its appeal: "A new chapter in the history of India has been opened. What will be written in that chapter depends very largely upon the lives of men and women now in our Colleges."

As the fitting close of the ceremonial function was delivered, in his own *extempore* fashion, an inspiring address, eminently in tune with the spirit of foundational fellowship, by H. E. Dr. K. N. Katju. Addressing the large gathering of ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Katju referred in glowing terms to the seminal influence of this Institution in promoting women's education for a century and hoped that it would continue to spread the light of education for many centuries to come. During the past one hundred years, he continued, this Institution had produced many women of eminence. These had, in their turn, reared great men as well as women who had an abiding contribution to make towards the shaping of India's history. Now the educated women may be said to have been turning over a new leaf and the Centenary was taking place in the new environment of a Free India. Under the new Constitution of the Indian Republic, men and women stood on a footing of absolute equality—equality in respect of rights and duties, of opportunities and privileges. One felt sure, he added, that in the coming era women of India would play a still greater part than before in shaping the destiny of their motherland. True it is that they had won political freedom but economic freedom they had still to achieve. To the solution of this economic problem, which was staring all in the face, educated women of today could make substantial contribution. It must not be forgotten, however, that women's special sphere of work was the home and in the matter of social welfare and that of rearing the next generation, the burden was to rest mainly on them.

With the delivery of the address and thanksgiving by Mrs. Suprova Sen, the Secretary, the first part of the afternoon's proceed-

ings came to a close; the meeting, however, continued uninterrupted, under the Chairmanship of Principal Lilalatika Bannerjee, an old student of the Institution, when addresses were read by past students dwelling on their reminiscences. H. E. Dr. K. N. Katju was conducted by Miss Karunakana Gupta, Convener of the Exhibition Sub-Committee, to the pillared building for the formal opening of the Exhibition—which being done Dr. Katju went over to the different rooms containing the instructive array of posters, clay-models, etc. Before leaving both Her Highness Maharani Sucharu Devi and Dr. Katju congratulated Miss Gupta for the organising talent and skill displayed in the selection of her exhibits, and Principal Mrs. Das, as the Chief Organiser, for the excellent arrangements for the day's function. Indeed the function on the Opening Day was a remarkably neat one, observed with the solemnity. The reception and accommodation of nearly four thousand people in the spacious pandal on the West, erected for that purpose, with the much-needed but much-maligned Police force, along with its new-fangled feminine adjunct, working in collaboration with the student Volunteers' Corps, bespoke an excellent sense of proportion and efficiency of organisation on the part of the co-ordinating administrative head of the Institution.

The evening part of the day's programme started at 6 p.m. with distribution of prizes and award of Cups to the present batch of students of the School and the College and ended with a "Variety Entertainment by School students", staging neatly a Gypsy dance, a comic sketch and the musical composition of "Vasanta" by Tagore. On the 29th afternoon we had under the direction of Sja. Usha Das Gupta, Physical Instructress of the Institution, assisted by Mrs. R. Manna and Shri Ramesh Chandra Banerjee on the musical side, a picturesque demonstration of Athletic games and Folk Dances by School girls of varying "Age-Groups" from 7-8 to 12-13 of which the most charming was the "Fairy Dance" by children of Age-Group 7-8. The evening portion of the programme was devoted to a Dramatic Representation of Tagore's *Chitra Kumār Sabhā* by past students of the Institution—the call for a repeat performance of which was a testimony to the excellent rendering of the playlet.

The climax of the Sessional Programme, however, was reached on Monday, the 30th January—the second anniversary of the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation—when the entire programme, as planned beforehand, was marked by the edifying influence of a commemorative service. The afternoon session was reserved for a Symposium on Women's Education which was presided over by Sreemati Hansa Mehta, Vice-Chancellor of Baroda University. The

contributions to the symposium are reproduced elsewhere as far as possible in abridgment.

The evening session commenced with a memorial service to Mahatma Gandhi of revered memory, with the invocative hymn from Tagore—"Hey Mahajivana, Hey Mahamaraṇa"—"O Thou Life abounding, O Thou Death all-consuming" organised in the presence of the full-sized portrait of Mahatmaji placed on the stage. The invocative note had scarcely faded out when it was caught up into the Vedic hymn of immemorial antiquity, reverberating down the corridor of ages, in glorification of that unknown Deity who is supposed to have ushered this world into existence through an act of self-denying ordination—"He who has given Himself away in creation, who has endowed us with all the strength or vigour we need, and who has thereby earned the worshipful homage of all creatures" (*Ya Atmada balada yasya Visva upasate*) and with this pre-historic prelude of musical intonation commenced the "Pageant", depicting the historic landmarks in the evolution of Women's Education and Social Life from age to age composed and directed by Mrs. Dipti Tripathi, Professor of Bengali, Bethune College. "Superb" is the word for it—superb in conception, superb in execution, superb in presentation. Nobly was it represented and nobly was it received. From first to last, the "Pageant" gripped the attention of the audience, numbering about four thousand people, and the immediate reaction to it was a united call for a "repeat" performance voiced by Lady Principals of two well-known Calcutta Colleges for women, in the interest of their own students, and of the student community as a whole—for the avowed purpose of imparting a high moral tone to the educational organisation of today, severed more or less from its ancient moorings. In deference to the unanimous request a "repeat" performance was enacted on the 2nd February before an enhanced audience and this in itself is an eloquent testimony to the intrinsic excellence of the "Pageant."

According to the scheduled programme, a Musical Soirée was held representing different stages in the evolution of Music in India—from the earliest Vedic *Sāma* through all the spires of secular development, viz. *Kheyāl*, *Topṭa*, *Thumri*, *Bhajan*, *Baṭ*, high-class songs of Rabindranath, leading to the national anthem "Jana-Gana Mana-Adhināyaka." This was very ably represented on the stage, with the help of musical rendering by his pupils, under the supreme direction of *Sangilanāyaka* Sri Ramesh Chandra Bannerjee who read out his instructive discourse on "A Hundred Years of Musical Flood-tide," punctuated with dance and musical demonstration.

To ensure unbroken continuity up to the 4th February when

the repeat performance of *Chira Kumār Sabhā* was staged, similar repeat shows of "Folk Dances and Athletic Games" and "Variety Entertainment by School students" were organised on the 31st January and on the 3rd February. On all these occasions, for the whole "Centenary Week", from the second day to the last, we had at a modest computation an audience of three thousand and five hundred people with slight variations. For aught we know, it has proved to demonstration the historically accredited fact that the Institution which had been founded by Bethune "with a feeling invocation to the Almighty to protect the work that had been so auspiciously begun", enshrines within itself, despite original opposition and apathy from the conservative sections of our people, the legacy of that popular support which entitles it to the name of a "National Institution", that is to say, in all its literalness an institution *of* the people, *for* the people and *by* the people of this land.

SYMPOSIUM ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The Symposium on Women's Education was held on January 30th, 1950. The Symposium was presided over by Srimati Hansa Mehta, Vice-Chancellor of the Baroda University who has the distinction of being the first woman Vice-Chancellor in India. The proceedings started at 1 P.M. with an address of welcome by the Principal of the College Mrs. Tatini Das. In welcoming the President and the speakers **Mrs. Tatini Das** said:

"May I on behalf of the Bethune Vidyalaya Celebrations Committee as well as all workers connected with this institution extend to you, Madam President, our cordial and respectful greeting on this ceremonial occasion? It is a matter of genuine gratification that we have in our midst the first woman Vice-Chancellor who was again the first Indian woman delegate to sit on the Human Rights Commission of the U.N.O. to preside over the Symposium in connection with the centenary celebrations of the first woman's College in Modern India. We recall here with peculiar satisfaction that by virtue of the acquired momentum of a century of women's education and social welfare supplemented by your equipments inborn as well as inherited, you have proved to demonstration the actuality of the ideal, the credibility of the incredible, that woman can take her place with ease and efficiency in any position that may be assigned to her in our educational, social or political structure. I also welcome cordially to this function, the five distinguished speakers whom we regard as five stars on the academic platform. We have here Miss Leila Khan and Miss Parimal Das, two teachers of teachers with special training in India and abroad. We have with us Dr. Kalidas Nag with his life-long devotion to the cause of India and the world, and Dr. Priya Ranjan Sen who is not only the author of *Western Influence on Bengali Literature* but also a distinguished teacher in our University. I also welcome friends from afar, not foreigners, for foreigners there are none in the Republic of Letters, Mademoiselle Christina Bossenac, with her valued experience of Santiniketan, Mr. H. L. Littler of the British Council with his Educational experience in Egypt who reminds us today of his namesake Sir John Herbert Littler, the Deputy Governor of Bengal who laid the foundation stone of this institution just a hundred years ago on the 6th November, 1850, and lastly Mr. Leslie L. Lewis of the Consulate General of the United States of America.

"In the inspiring context of the foundational ceremony and with

the spiritual asset of our “founding Fathers” and the contributions of their successors today, we can face the future with confidence—reckoning specially in the terms of our present achievements that a constitutional Republic will remain a dead letter unless it is enlivened by institutional practices of a Republic of Letters! On the Foundation Day our beloved Asoka tree was planted designed to serve as a symbol of Liberty and as the bond of fellowship—evidently of the Indo-British type with the promise of a one-world fellowship that is ever-more about to be!”

The Symposium started with a talk by **Miss Leila Khan** of the Basic (Primary) Training College for women at Hastings House, Alipore:

“Ever since the publication of the Central Advisory Board’s Report, also known as the Sargent Report, the public were made aware of the need for radical educational reform and the outlines of a scheme of reconstruction were also sketched therein. But it is sometimes forgotten that no change in organisation, no improvement in administrative machinery can by itself create a better type of education. What is needed is nothing more than a transformation of our primary schools. The immediate step to be taken is the raising of the status and quality of the teachers and of all those concerned with education, so that the education of the children of Bengal is placed in the most competent hands available. In keeping with these aims the Basic Primary Training College for women was started. The aims of the College are, (1) To train the staff of the Basic Training Schools in the theory and practice of Basic Education. (2) To acquaint the trainee with the problems of life, methods of social reconstruction and trends in modern education. (3) To enable the trainee to organise the school as an educational, cultural and social centre for the whole community. (4) To give the trainee an experience in democratic community living and organising such life in the college community. (5) To organise and conduct refresher courses on Primary Education. (6) To carry on research work in the general methods of education of the children of the pre-primary and primary school stage.

The curriculum of the training college has been conceived on two levels with a view to the all-round development of the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, ethical and cultural aspect of each student’s personality and to furnish her with the knowledge and give her opportunities to make her own contribution to this high calling.

In this post-graduate training College for the first time in the history of West Bengal, the medium of instruction is Bengali.

There is an attached *Experimental School* in the premises consisting of class 1 and 2, and there is hope of continuing the school up to an age limit fixed by the Government for Basic Education. The children belong to the Bustees and refugee settlements scattered in the locality. A *Nursery Training School* was started in August 1949 to train a few of the students in Nursery School work. The school has 50 students.

In the Hostel and College opportunity is given for organising democratic community life. The planning of the College and Hostel life is guided by the principle that education consists in the development of the whole man and his personality. What is applicable to the Godhead is also applicable to education, Sattyam, Sivam, Sundaram."

Mademoiselle Christine Bossenac of the French Consulate-General then addressed the Symposium:

"I was asked to give a talk on education. The subject is one of the most interesting, but it is also so vast a subject that one has to choose some particular aspect of it. Today I should like to recall briefly the history of the development of women's education in France.

We did not start very early in educating our women and we are slow in spreading knowledge among them. But it was the same all over the world. It seemed that men of the past centuries thought it was better to spend their money on jewelry and finery for their women than to educate them. The ideal woman for a Frenchman of the seventeenth century is described in Molière's comedy "*Les Femmes Savantes*" (The learned woman) of whom so much fun is made.

It is not at all seemly for many reasons that woman should spend so much time in study and know so many things. To train the minds of her children, to manage her household, to look after her servants and to regulate her expenses economically ought to be her study and her philosophy. Our fathers showed common sense on this point when they considered that a woman had reached the limit of the knowledge desirable in her if she were capable of distinguishing a doublet from a pair of breeches. Molière also voices his century when he makes one of his men say "I live by good soup and not by fine language."

Yet in spite of that prejudice there were quite a number of highly educated ladies in that time knowing Greek, Latin and Philosophy. We are sometimes amazed when we look at the list of the serious books which the charming and witty Madame de Sevigny took delight in reading. We know also that it was her friend, Mme de Fayette who wrote the first best novel in French literature.

Evidently these women were too few. They belonged to the rich and aristocratic class and were probably taught by the tutors who taught their brothers.

We must not forget however that at that time the first attempt at collective education for girls was made by Madame de Maintenon, the morganatic wife of the old King Louis XIV. She started her school at St. Cyr at Versailles and took great care of the young girls of noble families who were admitted. She asked Racine, the writer of the great French tragedies, to write a play for the girls. The first one was *Athalie*. It was staged with a beautiful display of rich costumes before the King and the courtiers. The success was so great that many of the young ladies had their heads turned and it was decided that in future they would appear on the stage in their school uniforms.

- In the 18th century women like men began to take interest not only in literature and philosophy but also in the sciences. They made experiments in laboratories built in their own homes, like Mme du Chatelet, Voltaire's friend. They were not admitted into the Academies but they managed to retain in their "Salons" the interest and presence of the great men of their day: scientists and encyclopedists. With them they discussed physics, chemistry and even Education. Rousseau had already written his book *Emile* which is a treatise on Education.

These women, Mme du Tencin, Mme Geoffrin, Mlle de l'Espinasse, did not belong to the aristocracy but to the bourgeoisie: the upper middle-class. Before the French Revolution the bourgeoisie was the educated part of the French nation. Perhaps some of you remember the name of Mme Roland who after playing a leading part in the first stages of the Revolution died on the scaffold. She was one of those intelligent women of the bourgeoisie class which started the Revolution in which some of them were to perish.

Some years later Napoleon who left his mark on so many good institutions in French administration, also made his small contribution to the education of women. He decided to have a school in which the officers' daughters would be educated. He called the school "La Legion d'honneur," from the name of the awards given to brave men and this school still exists.

All this sounds only like preliminaries and it is a fact that it is only in the nineteenth century that education of women was really developed. Then it was that many of the convents for women turned all their activities towards teaching. The initiative of those generous women who devoted their whole life to the imparting of education spread like a wave all over France: in towns and in villages schools

were opened. Some of these religious teaching orders are known to you as some still have schools in India as for example the Sacred Heart in the Nilgiris.

The importance of that private initiative does not stop there. It seems to me that it paved the way towards the organisation by government of Women's education. In 1863 Victor Duruy, Minister for Education under Napoleon III, created secondary classes for girls giving them a new syllabus without Latin which was compulsory in the boys' syllabus. One of the biggest Girls' Colleges in Paris is named after him. But it is only long after under the third Republic, that the Minister for Education Julie Ferry, between 1880 and 1881, gave the greatest impulse to the education movement in France by organising Government primary education. Education became free, compulsory and secular.

About the same time, in 1880 secondary colleges for girls were established while before there had only been a few classes open to them. The creation of girls' education and its further development may be said to have been brought about by the social changes of the last century.

So we may say that the scheme of women's education in France has taken a full century to be completed. It is not without resemblance to the development we are witnessing in India today. Such private institutions as the Santiniketan or this very college in which we are assembled now show in a very interesting manner the way in which education can be developed in India.

I hope that many of you, young students of the Bethune College, will join in the national task so worthy of your efforts. We cannot all be famous like Mme Joliot Curie, who was recently with us in Calcutta. Such women are exceptional. But we can all be good to others, pleasant, unselfish, ready for any work which comes our way and which will make us useful to our families and to our country."

Mr. H. L. Littler of the British Council spoke next:

'Your attention has been drawn to the strange and solemn coincidence that I stand today where a hundred years ago my namesake stood. If there is anything in a name—my surname like his is Littler and my other names are Henry Lawrence, though I can make no claim to any closer connection with either of these two people. Yet coincidence is strange, is it not? One of the still unexplained mysteries whose number is daily diminishing, and when I was appointed here to India, quite unexpectedly, a few months ago, I be-thought myself of these things and wondered. And I wonder still more today when, again unexpectedly, I am honoured by the call to take

part in these celebrations. I wonder whether it is a kind of fulfilment of destiny. I wonder whether through my eyes Sir John Littler looks out and sees that it is good—how well and truly laid was that foundation stone, how well and truly raised above it was the superstructure, how well and truly has been realised the vision which those few men conceived and cherished courageously a hundred years ago.

For it was a courageous conception, not only here but in England where (another coincidence!) the oldest women's College, Bedford College, also celebrated its centenary only a few months ago. My own School and College days were still loud with the clamour and controversy aroused by the self-assertion of women. The suffragettes in London chaining themselves to the Home Office railings, parading the streets with posters; the undergraduettes at Oxford demanding admittance to the lectures, examinations, degrees on an equal footing with men. I remember the discussion that raged in the cafés, the tales that were told in the Common Rooms. One in particular which shows to what length opposition was carried—the tale of a certain Don—I like to think of Cambridge!—who refused to move with the times—who, finding women in his lecture one morning, ignored them, and in his customary manner addressed only the men; 'Gentlemen'—who, on another occasion, finding only one man, said 'Gentleman'; and who, on a third, when there were no men at all, but only a few poor obdurate women, observed: 'Since there are no students present, there will be no lecture today'.

Now I hope that story is apocryphal or a tale that has gained in the telling. I re-tell it now simply to illustrate the height and the heat of the feeling in England a mere thirty years ago on the subject of the education or at least the higher education of women. It was indeed the latest and bitterest battle in a long campaign against those fearful forces that not only ranged themselves, Canute-like, against the successive waves—the long-pent potent waves—of the Education Acts of the 19th century, but in the invention of the printing-press and the abolition of the paper duty saw the writing on the wall spell doom. They shook their heads, they shake them still, and mutter the age-old shibboleths 'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise'—'a little learning is a dangerous thing'.

Such catchwords are as catching and as common as the cold, as hard to shake off, as enfeebling and stupefying; catchwords so soon become watchwords.

'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise'. How true we think—these happy simple people! But where *is* ignorance bliss? Is it not really everywhere, when we come to examine it, shot through with superstition and fear—a long-drawn demon-haunted night. Is

it not the darkness from which war and famine and plague and all the Horsemen of the Apocalypse emerge? And how can it ever be in any circumstances 'folly to be wise'? Wisdom indeed brings grave responsibility—responsibility for those less wise and fortunate—but with it golden opportunity to scale the heights tier upon tier till heaven and earth grow visible.

'A little learning is a dangerous thing'—again at first sight how true this seems but only *seems*, for it is always quality that counts in the end not quantity, and the trouble in the world today, to which our sceptics and critics point, is due to the fact that too much and not too little of the wrong kind of learning is being wrongly given and taken.

Of Women's Education its opponents say 'The Woman's place is in the home'. And who would dispute or deny it? But surely home and school have never been incompatible and surely, as has been so often urged at this meeting, woman may be better fitted by education to fill her place in that home, to look after husband better; to bring up her children better in health and happiness to that step from which they in their turn may climb, so that each generation may be raised a rung in the Jacob's ladder that leads from shepherd to angel.

Besides, the woman's place is not only in the home; from earliest times she has demonstrated her ability, her right to be in other places as well, and without any harm to that home, in field and factory, in hospital and school, in craft and trade and profession, in the highest strata of state, even upon the throne.

In Britain from Boadicea to Victoria we have been fortunate in our Queens. Queen Elizabeth was, as you know, an erudite scholar, proficient in Latin, and Greek and Mathematics and Music. Queen Victoria, whom the schoolboy (or could it have been the schoolgirl?) so inaptly described as the 'longest Queen on the English Throne', though less intellectually gifted, applied herself diligently to her studies and drew deep from her wide experience. Another Elizabeth is now being equipped for the task that appears to wait her.

In every walk of life today, thanks to their education, women are taking their place and holding their own with men. India and America have their Ambassadors, India her Minister of Health and her distinguished educationists, France her great women Scientists, Great Britain had in the late Miss Ellen Wilkinson, a Minister of Education whose work will be well remembered and she still has today appropriately a woman Parliamentary Secretary for Food. In the forthcoming General Election the cry will be no longer 'Votes for Women' but 'Vote for Women', and the granting of the demand for

'Equal Pay for Equal Work' may well set the seal of recognition on woman's complete achievement.

For in the furnace of war and under the hammer of hardship her mettle has been tried and tested, and 'the Lady with a Lamp', as Florence Nightingale used to be called, the Lady with a Lamp who groped her way through the darkness of the 1860's, has been transformed in my mind's eye into Liberty with lifted Torch.

I hope Mr. Lewis will pardon the 'liberty', but the torch is our symbol too, for we also in the British Council, whose motto is 'Truth will Triumph', we also in Institutes—some of them Women's Institutes—and in schools and colleges such as this do our utmost to spread the light—the light of knowledge and understanding of character and culture by which men are truly measured.

I stand here today, ladies and gentlemen, as you have kindly invited me to do so, in the place where John Littler stood, and looking back proudly with him, I am greatly encouraged to look forward—to look forward to the time—in another hundred years?—in fifty years?—in twenty-five years?—it depends upon you—upon us—when the men and the women of this land and of all other lands and of the whole wide world shall answer with the people of one of Mr. Wells' Utopian novels, when they were asked 'What is your Government?'—'Our Education is our Government'."

Dr. Kalidas Nag spoke on the historical aspect of the emancipation of Indian women:

"The foundation of the Bethune College in 1849 marks the culmination, as it were, of a historical process which focussed the attention of the public on the deplorable condition of Indian women. The horrid custom of the burning of Hindu widows attracted the attention of the English administrators as early as 1789. Sir William Jones had by then well established the Asiatic Society of Bengal, translating *Sakuntala* and Colebrooke his successor had begun his studies in Sanskrit and Hindu Law. Edmund Burke had thundered in the British Parliament, against the plunder of the property of the Begums of Oudh by Warren Hastings. William Carey and his colleagues of the Serampore Mission—especially Dr. and Mrs. Marshman—opened the 19th century with publishing the conversation of rural women in colloquial Bengali (কথোপকথন) and also by providing schools (on missionary pattern) for the women of Bengal. But the orthodox community was unconscious of the significance of the vow taken by Rammohun Roy in 1811, when his deceased brother Jugmohan's widow was burnt alive that he (Rammohun) would not rest till that inhuman custom was abolished. In 1813 Lord Moira issued regulations partially restricting the evil custom and

these regulations were further strengthened by supplementary orders of 1815-17. To oppose reform, some orthodox Hindus sent up a petition and at once Rammohun submitted his counter-petition in 1818. The agitation for and against continued for over a decade and although Lord William Bentinck finally abolished the *suttee* in December, 1829, the orthodox party even raised funds to appeal to the King in Council in England. But luckily for Indian womanhood Rammohun, the life-long champion, was then in England; through his powerful advocacy the reactionary appeal against the abolition of the inhuman rite was rejected by the Privy Council (11th July, 1832), a year before the death of Rammohun in Bristol (Sept. 1833). Thus he fulfilled his vow of 1811 and fought till the last for the very life and fulfilment of womanhood in India.

As early as 1818, when there were few educational institutions for Indian women Rammohun, in course of his controversy with the advocates for the evil practice of the burning of widows, made a most stirring appeal, which I quote partially from Rammohun's English version of his original Bengali pamphlet. It deserves to be quoted in extenso:

"... As to their inferiority in point of understanding when did you ever afford them (women) a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you assume them of want of understanding? If after instruction in knowledge and wisdom a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught, we may consider him as deficient. But as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati the wife of the Prince of Karnat and that of Kalidas, etc., were celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Shastras. Moreover, in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of the Yajurveda, it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it.

Secondly, you charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised: for we constantly perceive in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her husband; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

Thirdly, with regard to their trustworthiness If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. . . .

In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes; for one man may have two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic. . . ."

These lines penned in 1818 by Rammohun should be inscribed in letters of gold, as the clearest and earliest formulation of women's fundamental rights, and in fact the first charter of Liberties for Indian women. In his Bengali Weekly, *Sambad Kaumadi* (started

in 1821) Rammohun strongly supported the cause of women and in 1822 published his "Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of Females according to the Hindoo Law of Inheritance." This treatise was republished in England in 1832 showing thereby his life-long devotion to the cause of the uplift of Indian womanhood.

Rammohun's junior contemporaries like Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891)¹ were also worthy champions of the cause. Debendranath sent his daughters and grand-daughters to the Bethune School which again claimed to be nurtured (after the premature death of Bethune) by Vidyasagar with a motherly care. This young sapling grew into a beautiful plant when the first University was founded (1858) in Calcutta. Within 30 years from that date (1858) we find the first batch of our progressive women: Swarnakumari Devi (author and journalist) and Kadambini Ganguly (medical practitioner) attending as delegates to the Indian National Congress (1889). Gandhiji was at that time a young man of 20 and Rabindranath of 28 but they lived to witness a veritable revolution in the state of women in India and both championed the cause of womanhood as the surest guarantor of the independence of India. What happened in Bengal in the epoch of Rammohun to Rabindranath, will be found to have happened gradually in other provinces of India. So we hope that the Commemoration Volume that we publish on the occasion of the Bethune College Centenary will provoke historical reflections and surveys of the women movements in other parts of India and educate our new womanhood to appreciate the risks and possibilities of her march from a dismal past to a glorious future! Indian woman took her legitimate place as an equal partner of man in educational and cultural, social and philanthropic fields and ultimately fought side by side with male patriots to extort political and economic rights from alien rulers and to rebuild after centuries the triumphal arch of Indian Independence."

Mr. Leslie L. Lewis, cultural attaché to the Consulate-General of the United States of America, then spoke about the women pioneers of the 18th century in America now known as the Daughters of the Revolution. They and their descendants were life-long champions in advocating legal rights for women and sponsoring and financing some outstanding institutions of women. He ended by conveying the felicitations of sister organisations of America to the Bethune College and School on the celebration of its Centenary.¹

Miss Parimal Das and **Professor Priyaranjan Sen** spoke on

1. As Mr. Lewis left for Washington soon after the delivery of the address a fuller extract of his speech is not available for publication.

careers for women and the problems of the Calcutta University respectively.

Mrs. Hansa Mehta, the President, then delivered her presidential address the summary of which is given below :

“I consider it a privilege to address this audience on the occasion of the Centenary of the Bethune College. On an occasion like this it is meet and proper for us to recognise that Bengal first lighted the torch of education which has since been diffused through the rest of this land of ours. It is, as Mrs. Das rightly says, the First Women's College in India, and I deeply appreciate the privilege to be able to participate in your Centenary Celebrations.

I have, I confess, a soft corner in my heart for the Bethune College, and that for a special reason. Sometime in 1927, if I remember rightly, the then Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, while addressing the students of this College, probably at the time of a Prize Distribution Ceremony, made the challenging remark that in the matter of planning and organising women's education, no woman had as yet come forward. This challenge, happily, was taken up in right earnest by the All-India Women's Conference, with which I have been closely connected all these years. Indeed, it has ever since appeared to me strange and unnatural—and for this I am indebted to the Bethune College episode—that the curriculum of education for women should have been so far shaped by men exclusively. It has been so in the past but why should it still be so?—and the question presses itself on us with still greater force now that India is a Republic. Here women have to play their distinctive part in shaping women's education. The more so, because a new orientation is being imparted to our educational ideal in a Free India. Let us not forget that at first education, under our English masters, was designed to produce clerks at the Secretariat. But, surely, education is meant to be something higher than a large-scale manufacture of clerks! In one word, education should be so planned as to cater for the needs of the whole man or woman. Then, again, we have got to realise that there is no need for a separate college for women in the new set-up. So far as Bombay is concerned, we are thankful that there are no separate colleges for women. Now, at least, has come the time when men and women must learn to fight shoulder to shoulder for a common cause. As a sign of the times, reference may be made to the recent success of two women candidates in the Indian Administrative Service Examinations. These budding women administrators are to be hailed in all quarters and their example emulated by others to follow in their wake. Undoubtedly, it is an experience entirely new and worth having.

Hitherto the demand for women's education has been, rightly or wrongly, restricted to the professions of teachers, doctors and nurses, and not so much to secretarial jobs. We have had so far women teachers, women professors, women doctors; but we seldom hear about women lawyers. But in the field of jurisprudence the need for women lawyers is being keenly felt.

Dr. Nag referred to me as the one from the East along with Mrs. Roosevelt from the West to sit on the "Human Rights Commission." What we have been able to achieve therefrom, the future alone will decide. But we women cannot afford to forget what the two beloved leaders of the East, Tagore and Gandhiji, have done to champion the rights of women.

While talking in this vein, I should not be understood to imply the absence of any difference in the education of men and women. Of a certainty, there is absolutely no difference, in respect of the ideal of education for men and women; the difference comes in, only where the choice of professions or callings is concerned. When all is said and done, we have to remember that we women are makers of homes; and all schools and colleges should impart instruction in home-craft subjects alongside of the cultural ones.

May I close with an expression of best wishes for the prosperity of the Bethune College so that it may grow from strength to strength in the service of our common Motherland!

The Symposium ended with a vote of thanks moved by **Mrs. Mrinalini Emmerson**, Convenor of Symposium, to the chair and the speakers who had contributed to the success of the Symposium.

বেথুন বিদ্যালয় শতবর্ষ স্মারক গ্রন্থ

- (১) সাহিত্যে বঙ্গমহিলা
- (২) বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের কথা
- (৩) বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের শতবার্ষিকী উৎসব
- (৪) রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলনে বঙ্গমহিলা

সাহিত্যে বঙ্গমহিলা

শ্রীরাজেন্দ্রনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

দেড় শত বৎসর পূর্বে—উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভে বঙ্গদেশে স্ত্রীশিক্ষার অবস্থা মোটেই উল্লেখযোগ্য ছিল না। প্রধানতঃ সম্ভ্রান্ত পরিবারের অন্তঃপদ্র-প্রাচীরের মধ্যেই ইহা সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল; মেয়েরা ঘরে বসিয়া শিক্ষায়ত্নী সাহায্যে বিদ্যাচর্চা করিতেন। ‘সম্বাদ ভাস্কর’-সম্পাদক গৌরীশঙ্কর তর্কবাগীশ একবার স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রসঙ্গে লিখিয়াছিলেনঃ—

“কলিকাতা নগরে মান্য লোকদিগের বালিকারা প্রায় সকলেই বিদ্যাভ্যাস করেন, ‘প্রাপ্ত রাজা সদ্ধুময় রায় বাহাদুরের পরিবারগণের মধ্যে বিদ্যাভ্যাস স্বাভাবিক প্রচলিত-রূপে হইয়াছিল, বিশেষত রাজা সদ্ধুময় রায় বাহাদুরের পুত্র ‘প্রাপ্ত রাজা শিবচন্দ্র রায় বাহাদুরের কন্যা ‘প্রাপ্ত হরসুন্দরী দাসী সংস্কৃত, বাঙালা, হিন্দী এই তিন ভাষায় এমত সদৃশিক্ষিতা হইয়াছিলেন পশ্চিমতেরাও তাঁহাকে ভয় করিতেন।..... শ্রীযুত বাবু প্রসন্নকুমার ঠাকুরের জ্যেষ্ঠা কন্যা [সুন্দরসুন্দরী দেবী] বর্তমানা থাকিলে মজ্ঞাশ্রেণীর ন্যায় তাঁহার অক্ষরশ্রেণী ও নানা প্রকার রচনা দেখাইয়া সাধারণকে সন্তুষ্ট করিতে পারিতাম.....। শ্রীযুত বাবু আশুতোষ দেব [সাতুবাবু] মহাশয়ের কন্যা গোড়ীয় ভাষা, উর্দু ভাষা, ব্রজভাষায় সদৃশিক্ষিতা হইয়াছেন, এবং দেবনাগরাক্ষর লিখন পঠন বিষয়ে পশ্চিমতেরাও তাহার ধন্যবাদ করেন, বিশেষত শিল্পবিদ্যায় ঐ কন্যার যে প্রকার ব্যুৎপত্তি হইয়াছে অনুমান করি ইংলণ্ডদেশীয়া প্রধানা শিল্পকারিকারাও তাঁহার শিল্পকর্ম দর্শনে হর্ষ প্রকাশ করিবেন।” (৩১ মে ১৮৪৯)

ইহা ত হইল সম্ভ্রান্ত ধনী পরিবারের কথা। সাধারণ গৃহস্থ-পরিবারে মেয়েদের বিদ্যাশিক্ষার কোন ব্যবস্থাই ছিল না; বরং প্রাচীনাদের অনেকের বন্ধমূল সংস্কার ছিল, যে-মেয়ে লেখাপড়া করে সে “রাড়” (বিধবা) হয়। এই শোচনীয় অবস্থার কথা স্মরণ করিয়াই রামমোহন রায় ১৮১৯ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে সহমরণ-বিষয়ে বাদানুবাদে এক স্থলে প্রতিপক্ষকে বলিয়াছিলেনঃ—“আপনারা বিদ্যা শিক্ষা জ্ঞানোপদেশ স্ত্রীলোককে প্রায় দেন নাই, তবে তাহারা বুদ্ধিহীন হয় ইহা কিরূপে নিশ্চয় করেন?”

যে-সময়ে রামমোহন এই তিরস্কার-বাণী উচ্চারণ করেন, ঠিক সেই বৎসরেই কলিকাতায় সর্বপ্রথম প্রকাশ্য বালিকা-বিদ্যালয়ের সূচনা হয়। অন্যান্য অনেক জনহিতকর অনুষ্ঠানের ন্যায়, অগ্রণী হিসাবে ইহার গৌরবও মিশনরীদেরই প্রাপ্য। তাঁহাদেরই নিরলস চেষ্টায় অচিরে কলিকাতার বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে অনেকগুলি বালিকা-বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হইয়া ব্যাপক-ভাবে স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রচারের সূত্রপাত হয়। এই ব্যাপারে তাঁহারা কয়েকজন দেশীয় বিদ্যোৎসাহী ব্যক্তির—যথা, সভাবাজারের রাজা রাধাকান্ত দেব, কলিকাতা স্কুল-বন্ধু ও স্কুল সোসাইটির পশ্চিম গৌরমোহন বিদ্যালয়কার, জোড়াসাঁকো-রাজপরিবারের রাজা বৈদ্যনাথ রায় প্রভৃতির সাহায্য ও সহানুভূতি লাভ করিয়াছিলেন। গৌরমোহন স্ত্রীশিক্ষার পক্ষে জনমত গঠনের উদ্দেশ্যে ১৮২২ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের মার্চ মাসে ‘স্ত্রী শিক্ষাবিধায়ক—অর্থাৎ পদ্রাতন ও ইদানীন্তন ও বিদেশীয় স্ত্রী লোকের শিক্ষার দৃষ্টান্ত’ নামে একখানি পুস্তক রচনা করিয়া দিয়াছিলেন। ইহাতে তিনি লিখিয়াছেনঃ—

“কেবল আমারদের দেশের স্ত্রী লোকের লেখা পড়ার পশ্চি আগে ছিল না, এই জন্যে কিছু দিন কেহ করে নাই। কিন্তু প্রথম ইং ১৮২০ [১৮১৯ ?] শালের জুন মাসে শ্রীযুত সাহেব লোকেরা এই কলিকাতায় নন্দন বাগানে য়ুবনাইল পাঠশালা নামে এক পাঠশালা করিলেন, তাহাতে আগে কোন কন্যা পড়িতে স্বীকার করিয়াছিল না, এই ক্ষণে এই কলিকাতায় প্রায় পঞ্চাশটা স্ত্রী পাঠশালা হইয়াছে।”

কিন্তু এত করিয়াও মিশনরী-পরিচালিত বালিকা-বিদ্যালয়গুলি জনপ্রিয় হইয়া উঠিতে পারে নাই। ইহার কারণ ইহাদের শিক্ষাবিস্তার প্রচেষ্টা যে অবিমিশ্র সদিচ্ছাপ্রসূত ছিল না, —খ্রীষ্টধর্ম বিস্তারই যে মূখ্য লক্ষ্য ছিল, তাহা ধরা পড়িতে বিলম্ব হয় নাই। সুতরাং উক্ত বিদ্যালয়গুলিতে একমাত্র দরিদ্র-ঘরের—অনেক স্থলে নিম্নবর্ণের ছাড়া কোন শিক্ষিত ও সম্ভ্রান্ত পরিবারের মেয়েরা যোগদান করেন নাই। প্রকৃতপক্ষে সম্ভ্রান্ত হিন্দুরা মেয়েদের প্রকাশ্য বিদ্যালয়ে পাঠাইবার আদৌ পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন না। এই বাধা সর্বপ্রথম দূর করেন—সরকারী শিক্ষা-সংসদের সভাপতি, ভারত-হিতৈষী ড্রিক্‌ওয়ার্টার বীটন (বেথুন)। তিনি রামগোপাল ঘোষ, দক্ষিণারঞ্জন মদুখোপাধ্যায়, মদনমোহন তর্কালঙ্কার-প্রমুখ এ-দেশের কয়েকজন সুসন্তানের সহায়তায় ১৮৪৯ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের এই মে কলিকাতা বালিকা-বিদ্যালয় (বর্তমান বেথুন কলেজ) প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র গুপ্ত তৎসম্পাদিত ‘সংবাদ প্রভাকরে’ এই সাধু অনুষ্ঠানকে অভিনন্দিত করিয়া লিখিয়াছিলেনঃ—

“কামিনীরা পুরুষের অপেক্ষা কোন অংশে ন্যূন নহে, বরং স্থিরতা ও ধৈর্য্য প্রভৃতি গুণে শ্রেষ্ঠা হইতে পারে, অতএব তাহারা বিদ্যাশালিনী হইলে সাংসারিক লোকযাত্রা নিৰ্ব্বাহসূত্রে অতিশয় মঙ্গল হইবেক, পুরুষেরা সর্বদা সুনীতির বশে ভ্রমণ করিতে পারিবেন, তাহারদিগের স্বাভাবিক যে শক্তি আছে বিদ্যার অভাব জন্য তাহার ক্ষুণ্ণ হইতে পারে না, চালনা হইলে ঐ শক্তি যে কত উজ্জ্বল হয় তাহা বলা যায় না, পাঠক-বর্গের স্মরণ আছে, আমরা ১০ বৈশাখ শনৈশ্চর বাসরায় প্রভাকরে “দৈব শক্তি” শিরো-ভূষণ প্রদান পূর্বক নবমবর্ষীয়া এক হিন্দু বালিকার বিরচিত কয়েকটি কবিতা প্রকটন করিয়াছিলাম, সেই কবিতা যিনি পাঠ করিয়াছেন তিনিই চমৎকৃত হইয়াছেন,.....তিনিই অগ্নাগণকে এখনি বিদ্যা প্রদান করা কর্তব্য বলিয়া তৎক্ষণাৎ মনে উদ্যোগী হইয়াছেন.....। বিজ্ঞ মহাশয়েরা এতদ্বারা অতি সহজেই স্ত্রীজাতির বিদ্যানুশীলনের কর্তব্যতা জানিতে পারিবেন।” (২৬ বৈশাখ ১২৫৬)

বেথুন কর্তৃক বালিকা-বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা হওয়া অবধি দেশে প্রকাশ্যে স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রসার লাভ করিতে থাকে। ইহারই প্রত্যক্ষ ফলস্বরূপ অনতিকালমধ্যে আমরা কোন কোন বঙ্গ-মহিলাকে পদ্যর অন্তরাল ভেদ করিয়া সাহিত্য-ক্ষেত্রে অবতীর্ণ হইতে দেখি। তাহাদের রচিত কবিতা ‘সংবাদ-প্রভাকরে’ সাদরে গৃহীত হইতে থাকে।

১৮৫৬ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে বঙ্গমহিলা-রচিত সর্বপ্রথম পুস্তক* প্রকাশিত হয়; উহা ‘চিন্তাবিন্যাসিনী’ নামে একখানি নাতিদীর্ঘ কাব্য, লেখিকা—কৃষ্ণকামিনী দাসী। রচনার নিদর্শনস্বরূপ এই একান্ত দুষ্প্রাপ্য কাব্যখানির কয়েক পংক্তি উদ্ধৃত করিতেছি :

* ১৮৫২ সনে মিসেস মুলেন্স (Mullens) রচিত “স্ত্রীলোকদের শিক্ষার্থে বিরচিত” ‘ফুলমণি ও করুণার বিবরণ’ প্রকাশিত হয়। শ্রীনিয়াছি, ইনি না কি ভবানীপুত্র-নিবাসিনী কোন বঙ্গমহিলা। ইহাতে কাব্যনিক চরিত্র সৃষ্টি দ্বারা গল্পছলে স্ত্রীলোকদের মধ্যে তৎকাল-প্রচলিত কুপ্রথা ও কুসংস্কারের বিবরণ এবং কি উপায়েই বা সেগুলি নিরাকৃত করা যায় তাহা বর্ণিত হইয়াছে। প্রকৃতপক্ষে ইহাকে উপন্যাস বলা চলে না।

পদ্রুশের উক্তিঃ ঘোর রজনীতে তুমি কাহার কামিনী।
কিসের লাগিয়ে ভ্রমিতেছ একাকিনী॥
বয়েসে নবীন অতি রূপ মনোহর।
আছ রঞ্জে নাই সংগে সঙ্গিনী অপর॥
কি নাম কাহার কন্যা বল রসবার্তা।
অপ্সরী কিম্বরী কিম্বা হবে দেবজাতি॥

কামিনীর উক্তিঃ আমি হে রমণী, আছি একাকিনী,
কুলের কামিনী তায়।
তুমি হে এখানে, কিসের কারণে,
বল ওহে যুবরায়॥
একি তব রীত, হেরি বিপরীত,
নাই চিতে কিছু ভয়।
রমণীর পাশে, এলে অনায়াসে,
কিরূপেতে মহাশয়॥
আলাপ করিতে, বাসনা মনেতে,
নাই ভাব তাহে লাজ।
আমি নারী জেতে, তোমার সহিতে,
পরিচয়ে কিবা কাষ॥

পদ্রুশের উক্তিঃ দেবগণ মধ্যে হয় আমার বসতি।
ধর্ম নামে খ্যাত আমি শুন রসবার্তা॥
সমাদরে যারা করে আমার সাধন।
তাদের শরীরে করি সতত ভ্রমণ॥
মর্ত্যলোকে সেই হেতু আমার বসতি।
আপন বৃত্তান্ত ধনি কহ লো সম্প্রতি॥

কামিনীর উক্তিঃ প্রবৃন্তির কন্যা আমি দয়া নামে খ্যাত।
শ্রদ্ধা নামে ভ্রমণী মম জগতে বিদিত॥
মর্ত্যলোকে মহাত্মাগণের অন্তরেতে।
নিবাস আমার তাই ভ্রমি হেনমতে॥
সদ্রগণ শ্রেষ্ঠ তুমি ধর্ম মহামতি।
এরূপ ব্যাভার কেন অবলার প্রতি॥
তোমার উচিত কভু না হয় এমন।
ছাড় ছাড় পথ করি স্বস্থানে গমন॥

‘চিন্তাবিলাসিনী’র প্রকাশকাল হইতে পরবর্তী দশ বৎসরের (১৮৫৬-৬৬) মধ্যে আমরা আরও সাতজন গ্রন্থকর্তার সন্দর্শন পাই।* তাঁহাদের নাম ও রচনাঃ—

* *General Report on Public Instruction...for 1865-66 (p. 111) and 1866-67 (p. 82.)*

বামাসুন্দরী দেবী (পাবনা)	‘কি কি কুসংস্কার তিরোহিত হইলে এদেশের গ্রীবৃদ্ধি হইতে পারে’	... ..	ইং ১৮৬১
হরকুমারী দেবী (কালীঘাট)	‘বিদ্যাদারিদ্রদলনী’ (কাব্য)	... ..	১৮৬১
কৈলাসবাসিনী দেবী	‘হিন্দু মহিলাগণের হীনাবস্থা’	... ..	১৮৬৩
(দুর্গাচরণ গঙ্গেশ্বর পত্নী)	‘হিন্দু অবলাকুলের বিদ্যাভ্যাস ও তাহার সমুন্নতি’	... ..	১৮৬৫
মার্থা সৌদামিনী সিংহ	‘নারীচরিত’	... ..	১৮৬৫
রাখালমণি গঙ্গপ্ত	‘কবিতামালা’	... ..	১৮৬৫
কামিনীসুন্দরী দেবী (শিবপুত্র)	‘উর্বশী নাটক’	... ..	১৮৬৬
বসন্তকুমারী দাসী (ঢাকা)	‘কবিতামঞ্জরী’	... ..	...

একে যথোচিত শিক্ষার অভাব, তাহার উপর সামাজিক ও পারিবারিক প্রতিকূলতা—ইহা স্মরণ করিলে স্বল্পশিক্ষিতা এই সকল বঙ্গমহিলার প্রথমোদ্যম নিতান্ত অকিঞ্চিৎকর মনে হইবে না।

ক্রমশঃ মাসিকপত্রের পৃষ্ঠাতেও বঙ্গমহিলারা আত্মপ্রকাশ করিতে লাগিলেন। ‘বামাবোধিনী পত্রিকা’ বামাগণের রচনার জন্য পত্রিকার কয়েক পৃষ্ঠা উন্মুক্ত রাখিবার ব্যবস্থা করিলেন। চারিদিকেই স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রসারের আন্দোলন মাথা তুলিল। ১৮৬৯ সনে সরকার বেথুন কলেজের সহিত একটি শিক্ষায়ত্নী-বিদ্যালয়ের সূচনা করিলেন; কলিকাতার ব্রাহ্ম-সমাজগুলিও—বিশেষতঃ কেশবচন্দ্রের প্রগতিশীল দল—স্ত্রীশিক্ষার সর্বাঙ্গীণ উন্নতি-সাধনের জন্য বন্ধপরিকর হইলেন। স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা প্রতিপন্ন করিবার জন্য নানা প্রবন্ধ ও পুস্তক-পুস্তিকা প্রচারিত হইতে লাগিল। যে-সকল মহিলা ইতিপূর্বে বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত হইয়াছেন তাঁহারাও অশিক্ষিতা ভগ্নীগণকে বিদ্যাশিক্ষায় অনুপ্রাণিত করিতে লাগিলেন। স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রসারের সহিত পরবর্ত্তী দশ-এগার বৎসরে সাহিত্য-মন্দিরের পূজারিণীর সংখ্যাও দ্রুত বৃদ্ধি পাইয়াছিল। তাঁহাদের দান কেবলমাত্র কাব্য-বিভাগেই সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল না। ইহাদের সকলের নামধাম ও রচনার দীর্ঘ তালিকা না দিয়া মাত্র কয়েক-জনের উল্লেখ করিলেই চলিবে; তাঁহারা—

নবীনকালী দেবী	... ..	‘কামিনীকলঙ্ক’ (উপন্যাস)	... ..	এপ্রিল ১৮৭০
হেমাবিনী	... ..	‘মনোরমা’ (আখ্যায়িকা)	... ..	জুলাই ১৮৭৪
সুত্রাঙ্গিনী দেবী (প্রসন্নকুমার সর্বাধিকারীর পত্নী)	... ..	‘তারারচিত’ (রাজস্থানীয় ইতিবৃত্তমূলক আখ্যায়িকা)	... ..	১৮৭৫
ফৈজুমিসা চৌধুরাণী	... ..	‘রূপ-জালাল’ (প্রণয়মূলক আখ্যায়িকা)	... ..	ঢাকা ১৮৭৬
রাসসুন্দরী (কিশোরীলাল সরকারের জননী)	... ..	‘আমার জীবন’ (আত্মজীবনী)	... ..	ডিসেম্বর ১৮৭৬

গত শতাব্দীর সপ্তম দশক পর্যন্ত ইতিহাস সংক্ষিপ্ত। এই সময়ে বাংলা সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে এমন এক প্রতিভাশালিনী মহিলা আবির্ভূত হইলেন, যাঁহার গদ্য-পদ্য আমরা সর্বপ্রথম শিল্পসুধমার আশ্বাদ পাইলাম, যাঁহার হাতে বঙ্গভারতীর বীণায় মৌলিক নারী-সুধ বজ্রকৃত হইল; ইনি রবীন্দ্রনাথের অগ্রজা স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী। প্রতিভার যাদুস্পর্শে সর্বপ্রথম ইহার রচনাই রসমণ্ডিত হইয়া সকলের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করে। গল্প-উপন্যাস, কবিতা গান নাটক

প্রবন্ধ ও বিজ্ঞান—এক কথায় সাহিত্যের সকল বিভাগেই তাঁহার দান স্বীকৃত হইতে থাকে। এই সাফল্যের প্রভাব অচিরাৎ পরিলক্ষিত হয়। এই সময় হইতে শতাব্দীর শেষ পাদ পর্যন্ত এমন কতকগুলি মহিলা-সাহিত্যিকের আবির্ভাব ঘটে, যাঁহারা বঙ্গসাহিত্যে বিশিষ্টতা অর্জন করেন। স্থানাভাববশতঃ আমরা কেবল তাঁহাদের স্বল্প পরিচয়সহ দু-একটি বিশিষ্ট রচনার কথাই বলিব; রচনার কোনরূপ নিদর্শন উদ্ধৃত করা সম্ভব হইবে না।

স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী (১৮৫৫-১৯৩২) : মহর্ষি দেবেন্দ্রনাথের চতুর্থ কন্যা। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ ‘দীপনির্বাণ’ উপন্যাস (ডিসেম্বর ১৮৭৬)। বঙ্গমহিলাদের মধ্যে ইনিই সর্বপ্রথম সার্থক উপন্যাস, গাথা ও বৈজ্ঞানিক প্রবন্ধ রচনা করেন।

প্রসন্নময়ী দেবী (১৮৫৭-১৯৩৯) : সার আশুতোষ চৌধুরীর জ্যেষ্ঠা ভগিনী। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ একখানি ক্ষুদ্র কাব্য—‘আধ আধ ভাষণী’ (ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৮৭০)। প্রসন্নময়ীর ‘বনলতা’ কাব্য (১৮৮০) ও দুই ভাগে সম্পূর্ণ ‘নীহারিকা’ কাব্য (১৮৮৪-৮৯) পাঠক-সমাজে সুপরিচিত। তাঁহার লিখিত ভ্রমণকাহিনী—‘আর্যাবর্ত’ (১৮৮৯) উপভোগ্য।

জ্ঞানদানন্দিনী দেবী (১৮৫২-১৯৪১) : সর্বপ্রথম ভারতীয় সিবিলিয়ান সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের পত্নী। ‘ভারতী’ (১২৮৮, ১২৯০-১) ও ‘বালকের’ (১২৯২) পৃষ্ঠায় ইহার কোন কোন রচনার স্থান মেলে। জ্ঞানদানন্দিনীর নিকট হইতে আমরা দুইখানি সুলিখিত শিশুপাঠ্য নাটিকা—‘টাক্ ডুমা ডুম্ ডুম্’ (১৯১০) ও ‘সাত ভাই চম্পা’ (১৯১১) লাভ করিয়াছি।

শরৎকুমারী চৌধুরাণী (১৮৬১-১৯২০) : রবীন্দ্রনাথের “বালাবয়সের সাহিত্য দীক্ষাদাতা” কবি অক্ষয়চন্দ্র চৌধুরীর সহধর্মিণী। ইহার প্রথম রচনা—১২৮৮ সালের ‘ভারতী’তে মুদ্রিত “কলিকাতার স্ত্রীসমাজ”। শরৎকুমারীর রচিত সামাজিক চিত্র—‘শুভ বিবাহ’ (১৯০৬) রবীন্দ্রনাথের উচ্চ প্রশংসা অর্জন করিয়াছিল। তাঁহার সমগ্র রচনাবলী সম্প্রতি বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে।

মোক্ষদায়িনী মৃণোপাধ্যায় : ডবলিউ. সি. বোনার্জির ভগিনী। ইহার ‘বন-প্রসূন’ কাব্য (১৮৮২) সেকালে খ্যাতি অর্জন করিয়াছিল। ‘সফল স্বপ্ন’ (১৮৮৪) নামে ইহার একখানি ইতিবৃত্তমূলক উপন্যাসও আছে।

গিরীন্দ্রমোহিনী দাসী (১৮৫৮-১৯২৪) : বউবাজার-নিবাসী অত্র দত্তের প্রপৌত্র দুর্গাচরণের পত্নিবধূ। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ—‘জনৈক হিন্দুমহিলার পত্রাবলী’ (ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৮৭২)। ‘অশ্রুকাণ্ড’ কাব্যই ইহাকে সাহিত্য-সংসারে সুপরিচিত করিয়াছে।

মানকুমারী বসু (১৮৬৩-১৯৪৩) : মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্তের জ্যোতি ভ্রাতুষ্পুত্রী। ইনি অল্প বয়সে বিধবা হইয়া সাহিত্যসেবায় আত্মোৎসর্গ করেন। ইহার রচিত প্রথম গ্রন্থ—‘প্রিয়প্রসঙ্গ বা হারানো প্রণয়’ (১৮৮৪)। মানকুমারীর ‘কাব্যকুসুমাজলি’ (১৮৯৩) ও ‘বীরকুমার-বধ কাব্য’ (১৯০৪) সমধিক প্রসিদ্ধি লাভ করিয়াছে।

কামিনী রায় (১৮৬৪-১৯৩৩) : লব্ধপ্রতিষ্ঠ ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস-রচয়িতা চণ্ডীচরণ সেনের কন্যা। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ ‘আলো ও ছায়া’ কাব্যই (১৮৮৯) ইহাকে সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে প্রতিষ্ঠা দান করিয়াছিল। তাঁহার ‘মালা ও নিশ্মালা’ কাব্যও (১৯১৩) সে প্রতিষ্ঠা অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখিয়াছে। কামিনী বেথুন কলেজের ছাত্রী ও পরে শিক্ষয়িত্রী ছিলেন।

কুসুমকুমারী দেবী : বরিশালের অন্তর্গত লাখুটিয়ার জমিদার রাখালচন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরীর পত্নী, কবি দেবকুমার রায়চৌধুরীর জননী। ইহার লিখিত সামাজিক উপন্যাস ‘স্নেহলতা’ (১৮৯০) বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের উচ্চ প্রশংসা লাভ করিয়াছিল।

বিনয়কুমারী বসু (ধর) : ব্যারিষ্টার মনোমোহন ঘোষের ভাগিনেয়ী। বিনয়কুমারীর জন্ম ১৮৭২ সনের নবেম্বর মাসে। তিনি বেথুন স্কুলের একজন প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী; বার-তের বৎসর বয়স হইতেই সাহিত্য-চর্চা সুরু করেন। তাঁহার প্রথম রচনা—“জাগো। বালিকার রচনা” ১২৯৫ সালের মাঘ-সংখ্যা ‘ভারতী ও বালকে’ প্রকাশিত হয়। বিনয়কুমারীর প্রথম গ্রন্থ—‘নব মকুল’ নামে একখানি কাব্য (১৮৮৭)। ইহার রচিত ‘নিব্বার’ কাব্য (১৮৯১) সেকালে আদৃত হইয়াছিল।

প্রমীলা বসু (নাগ) : ইনিও মনোমোহনের অপর এক ভাগিনেয়ী। ১৮৭১ সনে প্রমীলার জন্ম। ইহার রচিত ‘প্রমীলা’ (১৮৯০) ও ‘তটিনী’ (১৮৯২) কাব্য দুইখানি সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে তাঁহাকে প্রতিষ্ঠা দান করিয়াছিল।

কৃষ্ণভাবিনী দাস (১৮৬৪-১৯১৯) : বউবাজারের শ্রীনাথ দাসের পুত্র—‘সেগুদরী কলেজ’-প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ব্যারিষ্টার দেবেন্দ্রনাথ দাসের সহধর্মিণী। এই বিদুষী মহিলার বহু সুচিন্তিত সন্দর্ভ ‘ভারতী’ (১২৯৬...), ‘সাহিত্য’ (১২৯৮...), ‘সখা’, ‘প্রদীপ’, ‘প্রবাসী’ প্রভৃতির পুরাতন পৃষ্ঠায় বিক্ষিপ্ত রহিয়াছে। কৃষ্ণভাবিনী নারীকল্যাণকার্যে জীবন উৎসর্গ করিয়াছিলেন; তিনি ভারত স্ত্রী মহামণ্ডলের প্রাণস্বরূপা ছিলেন। বিলাত-ফেরত হইয়াও তিনি বৈধব্যাবস্থায় হিন্দু বিধবার ন্যায় জীবন যাপন করিয়া গিয়াছেন। ১৯১৯ সনের ২৭এ ফেব্রুয়ারি তাঁহার মৃত্যু হইয়াছে।

অম্বুজাসুন্দরী দাসগুপ্তা (১৮৭০-১৯৪৬) : কবি রজনীকান্ত সেনের জ্যেষ্ঠতাত-কন্যা। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ—‘কবিতালহরী’ (১৮৯২)। অম্বুজাসুন্দরীর ‘প্রীতি ও পূজা’ কাব্য (১৮৯৭) সে-যুগে আদৃত হইয়াছিল। ইনি গল্প উপন্যাসও লিখিয়াছেন।

মৃণালিনী সেন : ১৮৭৯, ৩রা আগষ্ট মৃণালিনী জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। ইনি ১৩ বৎসর বয়সে পাইকপাড়ার ভূম্যধিকারী ইন্দ্রচন্দ্র সিংহের সহিত পরিণীতা হন। বিবাহের দুই বৎসর পরে ইহার বৈধব্য ঘটে। স্বামি-বিয়োগ-বিধুর অবস্থায় ইনি কাব্যচর্চায় প্রবৃত্ত হন। ইহার ‘প্রতিধ্বনি’ (১৮৯৪), ‘নিব্বারিণী’ (১৮৯৫) প্রভৃতি কয়েকখানি কাব্য একদা পাঠককে বিমল আনন্দ দান করিয়াছে। ১৯০৫ সনে মৃণালিনী ব্রহ্মানন্দ কেশবচন্দ্র সেনের দ্বিতীয় পুত্র নিম্মলচন্দ্র সেনকে বিবাহ করেন এবং স্বামীর সহিত বহু দিন বিলাতে কাটাইয়াছেন। নারীপ্রগতিমূলক নানা কার্যে ইহার নাম যত্ন দেখা যায়।

সরোজকুমারী দেবী (১৮৭৫-১৯২৬) : সুপ্রসিদ্ধ সাহিত্যিক ও সাংবাদিক নগেন্দ্রনাথ গুপ্তের ভগিনী। ইহার প্রথম গ্রন্থ ‘হাসি ও অশ্রু’ কাব্য স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবীর ভূমিকাসহ ১৮৯৫ সনে প্রকাশিত হয়। ছোট গল্প রচনাতেও সরোজকুমারী সিদ্ধহস্ত ছিলেন।

নগেন্দ্রবালা মদন্তোষী (১৮৭৮-১৯০৬) : ইহার রচিত ‘মর্ম্মগাথা’ (১৮৯৬), ‘প্রেমগাথা’ (১৮৯৯) প্রভৃতি কাব্যগুলি সেকালে আদর লাভ করিয়াছিল।

হিরন্ময়ী দেবী : স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবীর জ্যেষ্ঠা কন্যা। ইহার বহু গদ্য-পদ্য রচনা ‘ভারতী’র (১২৯১...) পৃষ্ঠা অলঙ্কৃত করিয়াছিল।

সরলা দেবী (১৮৭২-১৯৪৫) : স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবীর কনিষ্ঠা কন্যা, বেথুন কলেজের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী। জীবনের দীর্ঘকাল দেশসেবায় আত্মোৎসর্গ করিলেও মাতৃভাষার প্রতি ইনি কোন দিনই উদাসীন ছিলেন না; ‘ভারতী’র পৃষ্ঠায় তাঁহার বহু রচনার সম্মান মিলিবে। কবি-হিসাবেও তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠা লাভ করিয়াছিলেন। স্বরলিপি সহ তাঁহার ‘শতগান’ (১৯০০) এখনও অনেকের ঘরে-ঘরে বিরাজ করিতেছে।

প্রিয়ম্বদা দেবী (১৮৭১-১৯৩৫) : প্রসন্নময়ী দেবীর একমাত্র কন্যা। ইনি একজন

সাহিত্যে বঙ্গমহিলা



মহানুভাগী বসু
১৮৬৩—১৯২৪



শরৎকুমারী চৌধুরাণী
১৮৬১—১৯২০



প্রিয়ম্বদা দেবী
১৮৭১—১৯০৫

সাময়িকপত্র সম্পাদনে



মোহিনী দেবী
সম্পাদিকা "পরিচারিকা"



জ্ঞানদানন্দিনী দেবী
সম্পাদিকা "বালক"



কুমুদিনী বসু
সম্পাদিকা "সুপ্রভাত"

প্রতিভাশালিনী মহিলা-সাহিত্যিক; ই‘হার ‘রেণু’ কাব্য (১৯০০) সাহিত্য-সংসারে অপরিচিত নহে। শিশু-সাহিত্যেও ই‘হার বিশিষ্ট দান আছে।

সরলাবালা দাসী : কিশোরীলাল সরকারের কন্যা। ‘ভারতী ও বালক’, ‘সাহিত্য’, ‘প্রদীপ’ প্রভৃতি মাসিকের পৃষ্ঠায় ই‘হার অনেক গল্প-কবিতার সাক্ষাৎ মিলবে। সরলাবালার ‘প্রবাহ’ (১৯০৪) বাংলার শোককাব্যগুলির অন্যতম। তাঁহার লিখিত ‘নিবেদিতা’ (১৯১২) সুদীর্ঘ রচনা।

লজ্জাবতী বসু (১৮৭০-১৯৪২) : রাজনারায়ণ বসুর কন্যা। ‘সাহিত্য’ (১৩০০...), ‘প্রদীপ’ প্রভৃতি মাসিকের পৃষ্ঠায় ই‘হার অনেক কবিতা সাদরে স্থান পাইয়াছিল।

লাবণ্যপ্রভা বসু (সরকার) : স্যার জগদীশচন্দ্রের ভগিনী ও হেমচন্দ্র সরকারের পত্নী। এই বিদূষী মহিলার রচিত গ্রন্থগুলির মধ্যে দৈনিক ধর্মসাধনের সাহায্যার্থে লিপির আকারে সংকলিত ‘দৈনিক’ (১ম ভাগ ১৮৯৯, ২য় ভাগ ১৯০১) বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য; ইহা বহু ক্ষুদ্রিত আখ্যায়িকার তুষ্টিসাধন করিয়াছে।

প্রজ্ঞাসুন্দরী দেবী : মহর্ষি দেবেন্দ্রনাথের পৌত্রী, হেমেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের কন্যা। ই‘হার রচিত ‘আমিষ ও নিরামিষ আহার’ (১৯০০) সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে নিতান্ত অপরিচিত নহে।

সারদাসুন্দরী দেবী (১৮১৯-১৯০৭) : ব্রহ্মানন্দ কেশবচন্দ্রের মাতা। ১৮৯২ ও ১৯০০ সনে বিবৃত ই‘হার আত্মকথা ১৯১৪ সনে পুস্তকাকারে প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে।

পঞ্চাজননী বসু (১৮৪৪-১৯০০) : এই স্বল্পায়ু মহিলার ১৩ হইতে ১৭ বৎসরের মধ্যে রচিত কবিতাগুলি ‘স্মৃতি-কণা’ (১৯০১) নামে প্রকাশিত হইয়া তাঁহার প্রতিভার পরিচয় বহন করিতেছে।

এই ক্রমোন্নতির জের আজও পর্যন্ত অব্যাহত আছে। বঙ্গসাহিত্যে মহিলার দানের আয়তন উত্তরোত্তর বৃদ্ধি পাইতেছে। প্রবন্ধ, ভ্রমণ-কাহিনী, কাব্য ও কথা-সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে তাঁহাদের কেহ কেহ স্থায়ী আসন লাভ করিয়াছেন। যিনি বর্তমান কাল পর্যন্ত এই ইতিহাসের জের টানিবেন, সাহিত্যে বঙ্গমহিলার দীর্ঘতর তালিকা তাঁহাকে প্রস্তুত করিতে হইবে; কারণ স্বভাবতই জীবনের নানা ক্ষেত্রের মত সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রেও নারীদের অভিযান ব্যাপকভাবে আরম্ভ হইয়াছে।



কেবল মাত্র গ্রন্থ-রচনাতেই নয়, সাময়িকপত্র-সম্পাদনেও বঙ্গমহিলারা ধীরে ধীরে কম কৃতিত্ব অর্জন করেন নাই। পুর্বেই বলিয়াছি, ১৮৪৯ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে বেথুন বালিকা-বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার পর হইতে দেশে ক্রমশঃ স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রসার লাভ করিতে থাকে। মহিলাকুলের সর্ব-াঙ্গীণ উন্নতিসাধনের নিমিত্ত, তাঁহাদের রচনাবলী প্রকাশের জন্যও বটে, স্ত্রীপাঠ্য বিষয়-সম্বলিত পত্র-পত্রিকাও ক্রমশঃ দেখা দিতে লাগিল। এগুলির মধ্যে প্যারীচাঁদ মিত্র ও রাধানাথ শিকদার-সম্পাদিত ‘মাসিক পত্রিকা’ (আগষ্ট ১৮৫৪), মজিলপুত্র-নিবাসী উমেশচন্দ্র দত্তের ‘বামাবোধিনী পত্রিকা’ (আগষ্ট ১৮৬৩), দ্বারকানাথ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়-সম্পাদিত পাক্ষিক ‘অবলাবান্ধব’ (২২ মে ১৮৬৯), ডাঃ ভুবনমোহন সরকারের ‘বঙ্গমহিলা’ (এপ্রিল ১৮৭৫) ও ভাই প্রতাপচন্দ্র মজুমদার-সম্পাদিত ‘পরিচারিকা’ (মে ১৮৭৮) নাম বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। অন্তঃপদ্রবাসিনীদের জ্ঞানার্জন-স্পৃহা উত্তরোত্তর ব্যড়িতে লাগিল;

ক্রমশঃ তাঁহারা নিজেদের অধিকার ও অভাব-অভিযোগ সম্বন্ধেও সচেতন হইয়া উঠিলেন। এ-বিষয়ে আন্দোলনের ভার তাঁহারা নিজেরাই গ্রহণ করিলেন;—দেশে মহিলা-সম্পাদিত সাময়িকপত্রের আবির্ভাব হইল।

মহিলা-সম্পাদিত প্রথম সাময়িকপত্র—‘বঙ্গমহিলা’ নামে একখানি পার্শ্বিক সংবাদপত্র; ইহা খিদিরপুর-নিবাসিনী জনৈক মহিলার সম্পাদনায় ১৮৭০ সনের ১৩ই এপ্রিল (১লা বৈশাখ ১২৭৭) প্রকাশিত হয়। শ্রুনিয়াছি, ইনি ডবলিউ. সি. বোনার্জির ভগিনী মোক্ষদায়িনী মুখোপাধ্যায়—যিনি এক সময়ে “বাঙ্গালীর বাবু” লিখিয়া হেমচন্দ্রের “বাঙ্গালীর মেয়ে” কবিতার পাণ্টা জবাব দিয়াছিলেন। ‘বঙ্গমহিলা’র উদ্দেশ্য ছিল—“স্ত্রীলোকদিগের স্বত্ব প্রভৃতির সমর্থন করা।” ইহার পরমায়ু নয়-দশ মাস।

‘বঙ্গমহিলা’র পর মহিলা-পরিচালিত প্রথম মাসিকপত্র *—‘অনাথিনী’র আবির্ভাব। সম্পাদিকা—থাকমণি দেবী; প্রকাশকাল—শ্রাবণ ১২৮২ (জুলাই ১৮৭৫)। সাহিত্যিক ভুবনচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায়ের জামাতা—কাঁটালপাড়া-নিবাসী অনুকূলচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় ধূলিয়ান হইতে ‘অনাথিনী’ প্রকাশ করেন। থাকমণি সম্ভবতঃ তাঁহার কন্যা হইবেন।

ইহার তিন বৎসর পরে—১৮৭৮ সনের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে জনৈক বঙ্গমহিলা কর্তৃক ‘হিন্দুললনা’ নামে একখানি পার্শ্বিক পত্রিকা বারাকপুরের নবাবগঞ্জ হইতে প্রকাশিত হয়। ‘হিন্দুললনা’র পর ‘খৃষ্টীয় মহিলা’র আবির্ভাব। ইহা কেবল মাত্র মহিলাদের রচনায় পূর্ণ হইত; প্রকাশকাল—মাঘ ১২৮৭ (জানুয়ারি ১৮৮১), সম্পাদিকা—কুমারী কামিনী শীল।

এইবার আমরা যে মাসিক পত্রিকাখানির উল্লেখ করিব তাহার নাম সাহিত্য-সংসারে সুবিদিত; উহা—‘ভারতী’, ১২৮৪ সালের শ্রাবণ (জুলাই ১৮৭৭) মাসে প্রথমে শ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের সম্পাদকত্বে প্রকাশিত হয়। ১২৯০ সাল পর্যন্ত—সাত বৎসর স্ফূর্তভাবে পত্রিকা পরিচালন করিয়া শ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ অবসর গ্রহণ করেন। অতঃপর ‘ভারতী’র লালনপালনের ভার প্রধানতঃ স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী ও তাঁহার দুই কন্যার হস্তেই ন্যস্ত ছিল। সম্পাদিকাগণের কার্যকালের হিসাব এইরূপঃ

‘ভারতী’	... ৮ম—৯ম বর্ষ,	১২৯১—১২৯২ সাল	—স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী
‘ভারতী ও যালক’	... ১০ম—১৬শ বর্ষ,	১২৯৩—১২৯৯ সাল	— ”
‘ভারতী’	... ১৭শ—১৮শ বর্ষ,	১৩০০—১৩০১ সাল	— ”
	... ১৯শ—২১শ বর্ষ,	১৩০২—১৩০৪ সাল	—হিরণ্ময়ী ও সরলা দেবী
	... ২৩শ—৩১শ বর্ষ,	১৩০৬—১৩১৪ সাল	—সরলা দেবী
	... ৩২শ—৩৮শ বর্ষ,	১৩১৫—১৩২১ সাল	—স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী
	... ৪৮শ—৫০শ বর্ষ,	১৩৩১ বৈশাখ—১৩৩৩ আশ্বিন—সরলা দেবী	

‘ভারতী’র খ্যাতি ও গৌরবের কৃতিত্ব প্রধানতঃ রবীন্দ্রনাথ, জ্যোতির্শ্রীনাথ, শ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের হইলেও সম্পাদিকাদের হস্তে ইহার গৌরব কিছুমাত্র ক্ষুণ্ণ হয় নাই। সম্পাদিকাগণের বহু সুলিখিত রচনা ইহার পৃষ্ঠা অলঙ্কৃত করিয়াছে।

ইতিপূর্বে ১৮৭৮ সনের মে মাসে প্রকাশিত প্রতাপচন্দ্র মজুমদার-সম্পাদিত ‘পরিচারিকা’ নামে একখানি উচ্চাঙ্গের স্ত্রীপাঠ্য মাসিক পত্রিকার উল্লেখ করিয়াছি। পত্রিকাখানি নয় বৎসর পরে—১৮৮৭ সনের মে মাসে কেশবচন্দ্র সেন-প্রতিষ্ঠিত আর্থ্যানারী-

* ‘অনাথিনী’র তিন মাস পূর্বে নসীপুর হইতে ভুবনমোহিনী দেবী-সম্পাদিত ‘বিনোদিনী’ প্রকাশিত হয়। প্রকৃতপক্ষে ‘ভুবনমোহিনী দেবী’—এই নামের আড়ালে ‘ভুবনমোহিনী’ প্রতিভার কবি নবীনচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায় এই মাসিকপত্রখানি পরিচালন করিতেন। সুতরাং ইহাকে মহিলা-পরিচালিত মাসিকপত্রিকা বলিলে ভুল হইবে।

সমাজের পক্ষ হইতে তাঁহার জ্যেষ্ঠা পুত্রবধূ মোহিনী দেবী সম্পাদন করিতে আরম্ভ করেন। তিনি বিদূষী ও সুলেখিকা ছিলেন। এই প্রসঙ্গে ‘সুলভ সমাচার ও কুশদহ’ সানন্দে যে মন্তব্য প্রকাশ করেন তাহা উদ্ধারযোগ্য :—

“প্রথমাবস্থায় যিনি ইহার অধিকাংশ লেখা লিখিতেন তিনি এক্ষণে সম্পাদকের কার্যভার গ্রহণ করিয়াছেন। গত দুই বারের নমুনা যাহা দেখা গেল তাহা আশাজনক। স্বীয়লোকের পত্রিকা স্বীয়লোক দ্বারা প্রচারিত হয় ইহা অপেক্ষা আহ্বাদের বিষয় আর কি আছে?” (২৯ জুলাই ১৮৮৭)

মোহিনী দেবী “কস্মিন্নি বোবা নামাইয়া সংসারের নিকট যখন ছুটি লইলেন [৬ মে ১৮৯৪], তাঁহার অতি সাধের পরিচারিকাও তখন কণ্ঠধারহীন তরণীর ন্যায় কিছুকাল ভাসিয়া বেড়াইয়া কালসাগরে ডুবিয়া গেল। প্রথম বারের পালা শেষ হইবার পরে আর্থ্যনায়ীসমাজের চেষ্টায় পরিচারিকার পুনঃ প্রাপ্তিচেষ্টা হয়। শেষে ইহার পরিচালনার ভার আর্থ্যনায়ী-সমাজের তরফ হইতে ময়ূরভঞ্জের মহারানী শ্রীশ্রীমতী সূচ্যার দেবীর উপর অর্পিত হয় [বৈশাখ ১৩০২]। তিনি দক্ষতার সহিত পত্রিকা সম্পাদনের কার্য নিষ্পন্ন করেন। তাহার পর নানা কারণে যখন তিনি অবসর গ্রহণ করেন, তখন পত্রিকার ভার তদীয়া চতুর্থ সহোদরা শ্রীমতী মণিকা দেবী [২৭শ বর্ষ, ১৩১১ সাল?] গ্রহণ করেন। অষ্টাবিংশতি বর্ষ জীবনধারণ করিয়া অবশেষে নানা কারণে কাগজখানি বন্ধ হইয়া যায়।” (“পূর্বকথা” : নব পর্য্যায় ‘পরিচারিকা’)

১৩২৩ সালের অগ্রহায়ণ মাসে কুচবিহারের রাণী নিরুপমা দেবী সচিত্র আকারে ‘পরিচারিকা’র নব পর্য্যায় প্রকাশ করেন; তিনি আট বৎসর সূচ্যারূপে পত্রিকা সম্পাদন করিয়াছিলেন।

এত দিন বঙ্গমহিলা-সম্পাদিত কোন সাপ্তাহিক সংবাদপত্রের উদ্ভব হয় নাই; সে অভাবও পূরণ হইতে বিলম্ব হইল না। ১৮৮৩ সনের শেষভাগে কলিকাতার টালা অঞ্চল হইতে ‘বঙ্গবাসিনী’ প্রকাশিত হয়। এই সাপ্তাহিক পত্রিকার একটি বিজ্ঞাপন ভূদেব মুনোপাধ্যায়-সম্পাদিত ‘এডুকেশন গেজেট’ (১২ আশ্বিন ১২৯০) মুদ্রিত হইয়াছে; বিজ্ঞাপনটি এইরূপ :

বঙ্গবাসিনী

সাপ্তাহিক সংবাদ পত্রিকা

ডাকমাসুল সমেত অগ্রিম বার্ষিক মূল্য সহরে ১৥০ টাকা, মফস্বলে ২।০। আকার দুই ফরমা, ডিমাই এক সিট, উত্তম ছাপা, উত্তম কাগজ! প্রতি মঙ্গলবার প্রাতে প্রকাশিত হইবে, নগদ মূল্য দুই পয়সা মাত্র।

লেখিকাগণ—শ্রীমতী মোক্ষদাসুন্দরী রায়, সরোজিনী গুপ্ত, নিস্তারিণী দেবী, শিবসুন্দরী দে, কৃষ্ণকামিনী মিত্র, থাকমণি ঘোষ, সৌদামিনী গুপ্ত, আমোদিনী ঘোষ, অনুপমা দেবী, কুসুমকামিনী বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বিনোদমুখী দেবী, তরঙ্গিণী ঘোষ।

এই সকল মহিলাগণ কর্তৃক লিখিত বঙ্গবাসিনী আগামী আশ্বিন [কার্তিক?] মাস হইতে সাধারণের দৃষ্টিপথে উপস্থিত হইবে। ইহাতে সাহিত্য, ইতিহাস, জীবন-চরিত, বিজ্ঞান, রাজনীতি, সমাজনীতি এবং দেশীয় বাঙালা, ইংরাজী, সংস্কৃত ও বিলাতী ভালা ভালা সংবাদপত্র হইতে নানাবিধ সংবাদ ও প্রবন্ধের সুরভাগ উদ্ধৃত ও

অনুবাদিত করা হইবে। জ্ঞানী, মানী, ধনী, শিক্ষক, কৃষক, অজ্ঞান, বালক বালিকা, ব্যবসায়ী, স্ত্রী, পুরুষ, সকল শ্রেণীর লোকের জন্য লিখিত এবং ইংলন্ড, ফ্রান্স, আমেরিকা প্রভৃতি সুসভ্য দেশসমূহে বামাগণের লিখিত, নানা প্রকার সাম্প্রতিক ও সাময়িক পত্রিকার বিশেষ আদর হইয়া থাকে। তবে বঙ্গে আদর না হইবে কেন? বঙ্গবাসিনীর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য অশিক্ষিত লোকশিক্ষার প্রধান উপায়, আরও ইহাতে কয়েক জন সুশিক্ষিতা রমণী লিখিবেন, নানা কারণ বশতঃ তাঁহাদের নাম প্রকাশ করা হইল না।.....শ্রীগিরীন্দ্রলাল দাস ঘোষ। বঙ্গবাসিনী কার্যধ্যক্ষ। কলিকাতা নর্থ সুবার্বর্ণ টালা, ২ নং বঙ্গবাসিনী কার্যালয়।”

পরবর্ত্তী ১৫ই অগ্রহায়ণ (৩০-১১-১৮৮৩) ‘বঙ্গবাসিনী’র প্রথম সংখ্যা সমালোচনা-প্রসঙ্গে ‘এডুকেশন গেজেট’ লিখিয়াছিলেনঃ—

“বঙ্গবাসিনী (১ম ভাগ, ১ম সংখ্যা) সাম্প্রতিক পত্রিকা, স্ত্রীলোক কর্তৃক বঙ্গবাসিনীগণের হিতোদ্দেশ্যে সম্পাদিত। কলিকাতা হইতে প্রতি মঙ্গলবার প্রকাশিত হইতে আরম্ভ হইয়াছে। স্ত্রীলোকের লেখা বলিয়া ইহার ভাষাদিগত কোন দোষ নাই। বস্তুতঃ সকল বিষয়েই উত্তম হইয়াছে।”

‘বঙ্গবাসিনী’র পর হইতে শতাব্দীর শেষ পাদ (১৯০০ সন) পর্যন্ত মহিলা-সম্পাদিত আরও যে-কয়খানি পত্র-পত্রিকা সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে আবির্ভূত হইয়াছিল, সেগুলি—

‘সোহাগিনী’ : মাসিক পত্রিকা, প্রকাশকাল—বৈশাখ ১২৯১ (এপ্রিল ১৮৮৪), সম্পাদিকা—কৃষ্ণাঙ্গিনী বসু ও শ্যামাঙ্গিনী দে।

‘বালক’ : ১২৯২ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে (এপ্রিল ১৮৮৫) সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের সহধর্মিণী জ্ঞানদানন্দিনী দেবী প্রধানতঃ বাড়ীর বালক-বালিকাদের জন্য এই মাসিকপত্র প্রকাশ করেন। ইহা এক বৎসর সগৌরবে চলিবার পর ‘ভারতী’র সহিত সম্মিলিত হইয়া যায়।

‘বিরাহিনী’ : মাসিক পত্রিকা, প্রকাশকাল—কার্তিক ১২৯৫ (অক্টোবর ১৮৮৮), সম্পাদিকা—শৈলবালা দেবী। ইহাতে প্রধানতঃ গল্পই স্থান পাইত।

‘পুণ্য’ : প্রজ্ঞাসুন্দরী দেবী এই সচিত্র মাসিকপত্রের সম্পাদিকা, প্রকাশকাল—আশ্বিন ১৩০৪ (অক্টোবর ১৮৯৭)। তিনি তিন বৎসর যোগ্যতার সহিত ‘পুণ্য’ পরিচালন করিয়াছিলেন।

‘অন্তঃপূর’ : ১৩০৪ সালের মাঘ মাসে (জানুয়ারি ১৮৯৮) প্রকাশিত হয়। সম্পাদিকা—সেবারত শশিপদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের স্মিতীয়া কন্যা বনলতা দেবী। এই মাসিক পত্রিকা “কেবল মহিলাদের দ্বারা পরিচালিত ও লিখিত”। বনলতা দেবীর মৃত্যুর পর ঐশ্বর্য-চন্দ্র বর্ষের পত্রিকা পর্যায়ক্রমে সম্পাদন করেন—হেমন্তকুমারী চৌধুরী, কুমুদিনী মিত্র, লীলাবতী মিত্র ও সুখতারাদত্ত। ১৩২২ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে (এপ্রিল ১৯১৫) বিরাজমোহিনী রায় (সম্ভবতঃ নব পর্যায়) ‘অন্তঃপূর’ প্রকাশ করেন।

ইহাই হইল ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে মহিলা-সম্পাদিত পত্র-পত্রিকার তালিকা। প্রধানতঃ পুরুষ-পরিচালিত পত্রিকাগুলির আদর্শে গঠিত হইলেও নারীকণ্ঠে নারী-সমাজের অভাব-অভিযোগ ও কর্তব্যের কথা এগুলিতে ধ্বনিত হইতে থাকে। এই পত্রিকাগুলিকে ভিত্তি করিয়াই পরবর্ত্তীকালে বঙ্গমহিলাকুলের বস্তব্য বিশিষ্ট রূপ গ্রহণ করে।



বিংশ শতাব্দীর গোড়া (১৯০১) হইতে আজ পর্যন্ত পুরুষ-পরিচালিত পত্র-পত্রিকার সঙ্গে মহিলা-পরিচালিত পত্র-পত্রিকার সংখ্যা দ্রুত বৃদ্ধি পাইয়াছে। বর্তমান শতাব্দীর দ্বিতীয় দশক পর্যন্ত পত্র-পত্রিকার তেমন সংখ্যা-বাহুল্য ছিল না। এই সময়কার উল্লেখ-যোগ্য পত্রিকাগুলির পরিচয় সংক্ষেপে দিতেছি :

‘মুকুল’ : ১৩০২ সালের আষাঢ় মাসে শিবনাথ শাস্ত্রীর সম্পাদনায় বালক-বালিকাদের উপযোগী এই সচিত্র মাসিক পত্রিকা প্রথমে প্রকাশিত হয়। ৬ষ্ঠ বর্ষের (১৩০৭) ‘মুকুল’ সম্পাদন করেন—শাস্ত্রী-মহাশয়ের কন্যা হেমলতা দেবী। ইহার শেষ কয়েক সংখ্যা (২৩শ-২৪শ বর্ষ, ১৯১৮—জুলাই ১৯১৯) লাবণ্যপ্রভা সরকারের যত্নে প্রকাশিত হইয়াছিল। ১৩৩৫ সালের বৈশাখ মাস হইতে শকুন্তলা দেবীর সম্পাদকত্বে নব পর্যায়ের ‘মুকুল’ জন্মলাভ করে। দুই বৎসর পরে তিনি অবসর গ্রহণ করিলে ৩য় বর্ষ হইতে ১৩৪৮ সাল পর্যন্ত বাসন্তী চক্রবর্তী পত্রিকাখানি পরিচালন করিয়াছেন।

‘ভারত-মহিলা’ : ১৩১২ সালের ভাদ্র মাসে হেমেন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের সহধর্মিণী সরস্বতী দেবীর সম্পাদনায় এই মাসিক পত্রিকা প্রকাশিত হয়। নারীকল্যাণই পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য ছিল। ইহার পরমায়ু ১৩ বৎসর; প্রথম কয়েক বৎসর সর্গোরবেই চলিয়াছিল।

‘জাহ্নবী’ : ১৩১১ সালের আষাঢ় মাসে নলিনীরঞ্জন পিণ্ডিতের সম্পাদনায় ইহার প্রথম আবির্ভাব। ১৩১৪ সালের বৈশাখ (৩য় বর্ষ) হইতে ‘অশ্রুকণা’-রচয়িত্রী গিরীন্দ্রমোহিনী দাসী ইহার সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করেন। “জাহ্নবীর উদ্দেশ্য কি বলিতে হইলে, মোটামুটি সাহিত্যালোচনাই বলিতে হয়।...মুখ্যতঃ নিম্নপশ্চিম সমাজের আচার ব্যবহারের সংশোধন ও ধর্মালোচনাই জাহ্নবীর জীবন-রত্ন।” গিরীন্দ্রমোহিনী অতীব যোগ্যতার সহিত তিন বৎসর পত্রিকা সম্পাদন করিয়াছিলেন। বর্তমান লেখকের সর্ব-প্রথম রচনা এই ‘জাহ্নবী’তেই স্থান পাইয়াছিল।

‘সুপ্রভাত’ : ১৩১৪ সালের শ্রাবণ মাসে ইহার উদয়। সম্পাদিকা—‘সঞ্জীবনী’-সম্পাদক কৃষ্ণকুমার মিত্রের কন্যা কুমুদিনী মিত্র (বসু)। ‘সুপ্রভাত’ নয় বৎসর স্থায়ী হইয়াছিল। ইহা একখানি উচ্চাঙ্গের মাসিক পত্রিকা ছিল।

‘গৃহলক্ষ্মী’ : প্রকাশকাল—আশ্বিন ১৩১৪; সম্পাদিকা—শান্তিময়ী সেন। ইহা দ্বিতীয় বর্ষেই লুপ্ত হয়।

‘মাহিষ্য-মহিলা’ : প্রকাশকাল—বৈশাখ ১৩১৮, সম্পাদিকা—কৃষ্ণভাবিনী বিশ্বাস। “মাহিষ্য সমাজের অসাড় দেহে শক্তি সঞ্চার করিবার নিমিত্তই” এই ক্ষুদ্র মাসিক পত্রিকার আবির্ভাব। ইহা অনিয়মিতভাবে চার-পাঁচ বৎসর চলিয়াছিল।

‘আনন্দ-সঙ্গীত পত্রিকা’ : “সঙ্গীত বিষয়িণী মাসিক পত্রিকা”, ১৩২০ সালের শ্রাবণ মাসে প্রতিভা দেবী ও ইন্দ্রদেবী দেবীর যুগ্ম-সম্পাদনায় প্রকাশিত হয়। ইহারা কৃতিত্বের সহিত প্রথম আট বৎসর (আষাঢ় ১৩২৮ পর্যন্ত) পত্রিকা সম্পাদন করিয়াছিলেন।

বর্তমান শতাব্দীর তৃতীয় দশক হইতে অসংখ্য স্বল্পায়ু পত্রিকার আবির্ভাবে আমরা জর্জরিত হইয়াছি বলিলে অত্যুক্তি হইবে না। দেশের নারী-সমাজও পিছাইয়া থাকেন নাই। পশ্চিম হইতে প্রগতির বন্যা আসিয়াছে, পুরুষদের সঙ্গে তাঁহারাও প্রতিযোগিতা করিয়াছেন। তাঁহারা তাঁহাদের কথা নিজের ভাষায় বলিতে চাহিয়াছেন, সুতরাং প্রগতিমূলক বিবিধ পত্র-পত্রিকা পরিচালনা করিতে তাঁহারা প্রয়াস পাইয়াছেন। শিশুদের প্রচলিত শিক্ষা-পদ্ধতিতে আস্থা হারাইয়া তাঁহারা নূতন পদ্ধতিতে শিশুশিক্ষা বিষয়ক প্রচার চাহিয়াছেন, সে সম্পর্কেও

নানা পত্রিকার উদ্ভব হইয়াছে। মুসলমান মহিলা সমাজেও নব জাগরণ আসিয়াছে, তাঁহারাও যথাসাধ্য এই উদ্যমে যোগ দিয়াছেন, নানা সাময়িক পত্র-পত্রিকা প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন। তাহা ছাড়া, রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলনেও মেয়েরা পশ্চাৎপদ থাকিতে চাহেন নাই। রাজনীতি-সংক্রান্ত সাধারণ ও দলগত পত্রিকাও তাঁহারা বাহির করিয়াছেন। অধিকাংশই স্থায়ী হয় নাই। যেগুলি দীর্ঘজীবী হইয়াছে অথবা উৎকর্ষের দিক দিয়া সাহিত্যের ইতিহাসে স্থান লাভ করিবার যোগ্য, আমরা কেবল মাত্র সেইগুলির সংক্ষিপ্ত পরিচয় দিব* :

‘আম্বেসা’ : ইহাই বোধ হয় মুসলিম মহিলা-পরিচালিত প্রথম মাসিকপত্র। প্রকাশকাল—বৈশাখ ১৩২৮, সম্পাদিকা—বেগম সফিয়া খাতুন। নারীকল্যাণই পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য ছিল।

‘বাংলার কথা’ : ১৩২৮ সালের ১৪ই আশ্বিন (৩০-৯-১৯২১) দেশবন্ধু চিত্তরঞ্জন দাসের সম্পাদনায় “বাংলার নবযুগের সাপ্তাহিক মদুপত্র” ‘বাংলার কথা’ প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয়। অল্প দিন পরেই তিনি কারাবরণ করিলে তৎপত্নী বাসন্তী দেবী ১২শ সংখ্যা (২৩-১২-১৯২১) হইতে পত্রিকাখানির সম্পাদিকা হন। ইহা একখানি উচ্চাঙ্গের পত্রিকা ছিল। শরৎচন্দ্রের অনেক সূচিন্তিত প্রবন্ধ—‘শিক্ষার বিরোধ’, “স্বরাজ সাধনায় নারী”, “সত্য ও মিথ্যা”, “মহাত্মাজী” প্রভৃতি ইহার পৃষ্ঠা অলঙ্কৃত করিয়াছে।

‘নব্যভারত’ : ১২৯০ সালের জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাসে দেবীপ্রসন্ন রায় চৌধুরীর সম্পাদনায় এই সুপরিচিত মাসিকপত্রিকাখানি প্রথমে প্রকাশিত হয়। ১৩২৮ সালের আশ্বিন-কান্তিক যুগ্ম-সংখ্যা হইতে দেবীপ্রসন্নের পত্নবধূ ফজলুললিনী রায় চৌধুরী ‘নব্যভারত’ের সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করেন; ১৩৩২ সাল (৪৩শ বর্ষ) পর্যন্ত পত্রিকাখানি জীবিত ছিল।

‘শ্রেয়সী’ : ১৩২৯ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে ক্ষিতিমোহন সেন শাস্ত্রীর পত্নী কিরণবালা সেনের সম্পাদনায় শান্তিনিকেতন হইতে এই মাসিক পত্রিকা জন্মলাভ করে। প্রধানতঃ শান্তিনিকেতনবাসিনী মহিলাদের রচনাই ইহাতে স্থান পাইত; রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনেক রচনাও ইহার পৃষ্ঠা অলঙ্কৃত করিয়াছে। এক বৎসর চলিবার পর ইহা ‘শান্তিনিকেতন’ পত্রের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়; ইহারই “নারী-বিভাগ” রূপে কিরণবালা সেনের সম্পাদনায় ১৩৩০ সালের বৈশাখ হইতে পৌষ পর্যন্ত ‘শ্রেয়সী’ জীবিত ছিল।

‘মাতৃ-মন্দির’ : প্রকাশকাল—আষাঢ় ১৩৩০, সম্পাদক—অক্ষয়কুমার নন্দী ও সুরবালা দত্ত। সুরবালা প্রথম পাঁচ বৎসর (১৩৩০-৩৪) যুগ্ম-সম্পাদক ছিলেন; ৭ম বর্ষ ও ৮ম বর্ষের ৭ম সংখ্যা পর্যন্ত যুগ্ম-সম্পাদক ছিলেন—সুশীলা নন্দী। অতঃপর পত্রিকাখানির প্রচার রহিত হয়।

‘বঙ্গনারী’ : ময়মনসিংহ হইতে প্রকাশিত মাসিক পত্রিকা, প্রকাশকাল—আশ্বিন ১৩৩০, সম্পাদিকা—চিন্ময়ী দেবী।

* মেয়েদের স্কুল-কলেজ হইতেও সাময়িকভাবে পত্র-পত্রিকা প্রচারিত হইয়াছে। দৃষ্টান্তস্বরূপ, সীতা দেবী-সম্পাদিত মাসিক ‘দীপালি’ (ব্রাহ্ম বালিকা বিদ্যালয়, ফাল্গুন ১৩২৭), সুবর্ণময়ী গৃহ-সম্পাদিত ত্রৈমাসিক ‘দীপক’ (পাবনা বালিকা বিদ্যালয়, বৈশাখ-আষাঢ় ১৩২৮), সুধা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়-সম্পাদিত ‘প্রদীপ’ (শিবপুর ভবানী বালিকা বিদ্যালয়, অগ্রহায়ণ ১৩৪৮) পত্রিকার উল্লেখ করা যাইতে পারে। ইহা ছাড়া ‘কিশোরী’ (সুধা দেবী-সম্পাদিত, আশ্বিন ১৩৩৮), ‘রূপরেখা’ (জাহান-আরা চৌধুরী-সম্পাদিত, পৌষ ১৩৩৯; পর-বৎসর হইতে ‘বর্ষাবাগী’ নামে), ‘সোনার কাঠি’ (রাধারাগী দেবী-সম্পাদিত, আশ্বিন ১৩৪৪), ‘উৎসব’ (শালতা দেবী-সম্পাদিত, মাঘ ১৩৪৫) প্রভৃতির মত বার্ষিক সংকলনও প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে। আমরা এই শ্রেণীর সাময়িকপত্রের বিবরণ সংকলন করিবার চেষ্টা করি নাই।

‘প্রমিক’ : ১৩৩১ সালে সন্তোষকুমারী গদ্যস্তার সম্পাদনায় এই সাস্তাহিক পত্র প্রকাশিত হয়।

‘বঙ্গলক্ষ্মী’ : নারীগণের সম্বাঙ্গীণ উন্নতিসাধনের উদ্দেশ্যে ১৩৩২ সালের অগ্রহায়ণ মাসে (নবেম্বর ১৯২৫) সরোজনলিনী নারীমঙ্গল সমিতির মদুখপত্র-স্বরূপ এই সচিত্র মাসিক পত্রিকা প্রকাশিত হয়। ইহা আগাগোড়াই মহিলা-হস্তে সদ্ভদ্রভাবে পরিচালিত হইয়া আসিতেছে। সম্পাদিকাগণের কার্যকাল এইরূপঃ

১৩৩২ অগ্রহায়ণ—১৩৩৩ চৈত্র	... কুমুদিনী বসু, বি.এ.
১৩৩৪ বৈশাখ—কার্তিক	... লতিকা বসু, বি.লিট্ (অঙ্কন)
১৩৩৪ অগ্রহায়ণ—১৩৫৫ কার্তিক	... হেমলতা দেবী (ঠাকুর)
১৩৫৫ জ্যৈষ্ঠ ... ..	... হেমলতা দেবী, শান্তা দেবী ও আরতি দত্ত

‘তরুণ শক্তি’ : মানভূমের অন্তর্গত রামচন্দ্রপুর গ্রামের কম্বিসংঘ ও আশ্রমের মদুখপত্র-স্বরূপ এই পত্রিকা পদুর্লিয়া হইতে প্রকাশিত হইত। ১৩৩৬ সালের জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাসে আশ্রম-প্রতিষ্ঠাতা রাজনৈতিক অপরাধে কারাবরণ করিলে ‘তরুণশক্তি’র সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করেন রাজবালা দেবী (দ্রঃ ‘প্রবাসী’, অগ্রহায়ণ ১৩৩৬)।

‘মুক্ত’ : সচিত্র সাস্তাহিক সংবাদপত্র, পরিচালিকা—তরুবালা সেন, প্রকাশকাল—৩৩ ফাল্গুন ১৩৩৭।

‘জয়শ্রী’ : ১৩৩৮ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে এই সচিত্র মাসিক পত্রিকা প্রথমে ঢাকা হইতে প্রকাশিত হয়। লীলাবতী নাগ (রায়) ইহার সম্পাদিকা। পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য—“বর্তমান যুগের মেয়েদের চিন্তা ও কর্মের গতি নির্দেশ এবং ভাবী সমাজ ও রাষ্ট্র গঠন কার্যে স্থান গ্রহণে সহায়তা করা।” ‘জয়শ্রী’র ভাণ্ডে একাধিক বার সরকারী লাঞ্ছনা ঘটিয়াছে, মাঝে মাঝে প্রচারও বন্ধ হইয়াছে। এই মহিলা-পরিচালিত পত্রিকাখানি বিভিন্ন সময়ে যাহারা পরিচালনা করিয়াছেন তাহাদের নাম ও কার্যকালঃ—

১ম বর্ষ : বৈশাখ-চৈত্র	১৩৩৮	... লীলাবতী নাগ
২য় বর্ষ :	.. ১৩৩৯	... শকুন্তলা দেবী
৩য় বর্ষ :	.. ১৩৪০	... শকুন্তলা দেবী।
		বীণাপাণি রায় (শেষাঙ্ক)
৪র্থ বর্ষ :	.. ১৩৪১	... উষারাগী রায়
৫ম বর্ষ :	.. ১৩৪২	... ঐ
৬ষ্ঠ বর্ষ :	প্রচার বন্ধ ছিল	
৭ম বর্ষ :	আষাঢ় ১৩৪৫—জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৪৬	... লীলাবতী নাগ
৮ম বর্ষ :	আষাঢ় ১৩৪৬—জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৪৭	... লীলাবতী রায়
৯ম বর্ষ :	আষাঢ় ১৩৪৭—জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৪৮	... লীলা রায়
১০ম বর্ষ :	আষাঢ় ১৩৪৮—চৈত্র ১৩৪৮	... ঐ
১১শ-১৩শ বর্ষ :	ফাল্গুন ১৩৫৩—মাঘ ১৩৫৬	... ঐ
১৪শ বর্ষ :	বৈশাখ ১৩৫৭	

‘অঙ্কুর’ : ছোটদের সচিত্র মাসিকপত্র, প্রধানতঃ Treasure Chest-এর বঙ্গানুবাদ। ১৪শ বর্ষ (আগষ্ট ১৯৪৪) হইতে লাবণ্যপ্রভা মল্লিক, বি.এ., বি.টি. ‘অঙ্কুর’ সম্পাদন করিয়া আসিতেছেন।

‘বলবল’ : ইহা প্রথমে বৎসরে তিন বার প্রকাশিত হইত। প্রকাশকাল—বৈশাখ-শ্রাবণ ১৩৪০, সম্পাদক—মহম্মদ হাবিবুল্লা ও শামসুদীন নাহার। ১৩৪৩ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে ‘বলবল’ মাসিকপত্রে রূপান্তরিত হয়। এই সুপরিচালিত পত্রখানি ১৩৪৬ সালে লুপ্ত হয়।

‘এডুকেশন গেজেট’ : ১৩৪১ সালের বৈশাখ মাস হইতে অনুরূপা দেবী (কুমারদেব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সহযোগে) এই সাপ্তাহিক বাস্তবাহ কিছদিন সম্পাদন করিয়াছিলেন।

‘রূপশ্রী’ : মাসিক পত্রিকা। প্রথম সংখ্যার প্রকাশকাল—কার্তিক ১৩৪১। সম্পাদিকা—শ্রীবেলা দেবী (ঘোষ)। পরমায়ু দুই বৎসর।

‘গৃহ-লক্ষ্মী’ : ১৩৪৪ সালের আশ্বিন মাসে কনকপ্রভা দেবীর সম্পাদনায় এই মাসিক-পত্রিকা প্রকাশিত হয়। “শ্রীহট্ট তথা সমগ্র আসামে মাতৃজাতির উন্নতিবিধায়ক নারী-পরিচালিত কোন সংবাদপত্র নাই। সেই অভাব যথাসাধ্য দূর করিয়া বাংলা ও আসামের নারী-জাতিকে জগৎবরেণ্য করিয়া তুলিবার জন্য আমার ক্ষুদ্র শক্তি দ্বারা এই ‘গৃহ-লক্ষ্মী’ নামক মাসিক পত্রিকার পরিচালনায় হস্তক্ষেপ করিলাম।” এই শারদীয়া সংখ্যার প্রায় এক বৎসর পরে “ভাদ্র ১৩৪৫” সংখ্যা প্রকাশিত হয়; এই সংখ্যাটিকে “প্রথম বর্ষ, প্রথম সংখ্যা” বলিয়া চিহ্নিত করা হইয়াছে। ১ম বর্ষ ৬ষ্ঠ সংখ্যা (মাঘ ১৩৪৫) হইতে পত্রিকাখানির নামকরণ হয় ‘জাগৃহি’ “আসামের মহিলা পরিচালিত একমাত্র মাসিক”; এই সংখ্যায় সম্পাদকীয় মন্তব্যে প্রকাশ :—“‘গৃহ-লক্ষ্মী’ আজ ‘জাগৃহি’ নাম ধারণ করিয়া পাঠক-পাঠিকার নিকট উপস্থিত হইয়াছে। এক দিকে আমাদের শূভানুধ্যায়ী লেখক-লেখিকাদের তাগিদ, অপর দিকে প্রগতিশীল নারী-আন্দোলনের মূখ্যপত্ররূপে ‘গৃহ-লক্ষ্মী’র নাম পরিবর্তন প্রয়োজনীয় তাই আজ জাগৃহি নারী জাগরণের বাস্তব বহন করিয়া আত্মপ্রকাশ করিয়াছে।.....নারীজাতির যুগযুগান্ত সঞ্চিত বেদনার অবসানই আমাদের আদর্শ।” প্রথম তিন সংখ্যার পর ‘জাগৃহি’ বোধ হয় আর প্রকাশিত হয় নাই।

‘মন্দিরা’ : ১৩৪৫ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে এই সচিব মাসিক পত্রিকার আবির্ভাব : পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্যে সম্বন্ধে ১ম সংখ্যায় এইরূপ লিখিত হইয়াছে :—“জাতির জীবনে আজ চলার গতিবেগ এসেছে। রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক, সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক—সর্বদিকেই আজ মনোভী-অভিযান সূর্য হয়েছেন। এই মনোভী-অভিযানের সঙ্গ তাল রেখে চলতে চায় মন্দিরা।” প্রথম দশ বৎসর ‘মন্দিরা’র সম্পাদন-ভার মহিলা-হস্তে ন্যস্ত ছিল। তাঁহাদের নাম ও কার্যকাল এইরূপ :—

১৩৪৫ বৈশাখ—১৩৪৬ চৈত্র	...	...	কমলা চট্টোপাধ্যায়
১৩৪৭ বৈশাখ—১৩৪৯ শ্রাবণ	...	..	কমলা দাসগুপ্তা
১৩৪৯ ভাদ্র —১৩৫২ অগ্রহায়ণ	...	...	স্নেহলতা সেন
১৩৫২ পৌষ —১৩৫৪ চৈত্র	...	...	কমলা দাশগুপ্ত

‘বিজয়িনী’ : শিলচর হইতে প্রকাশিত মাসিক পত্রিকা; প্রকাশকাল—আশ্বিন ১৩৪৭; সম্পাদিকা—অরুণ চন্দ্রের সহধর্মিণী জ্যোৎস্না চন্দ, বি.এ.। পত্রিকা প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য :—“মহিলা সমাজের নিজস্ব একটি মূখ্যপত্রের প্রয়োজনীয়তা অনুভব করিলেও এতদণ্ডে মাসিক পত্রিকা পরিচালনের পৌনঃপৌনিক ব্যর্থতার কথা স্মরণ করিয়া বহু ভয় ভাবনার মধ্যে আমরা স্থানীয় ‘নারীকল্যাণ সমিতি’র উদ্যোগে ও সাহায্যে নারীসমাজের সেবাক্ষেপে ‘বিজয়িনী’ নামক সাময়িকপত্র লইয়া আপনাদের সাক্ষাতে উপস্থিত হইলাম।.....আমাদের

পরম সৌভাগ্য যে যাত্রারম্ভে কবিগুরু রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমাদের এই প্রচেষ্টাকে আশীর্বাদ করিয়া সন্মেনে ইহার নামকরণ করিয়াছেন।” ‘বিজয়িনী’ এক বৎসর জীবিত ছিল।

‘শিক্ষা’ : শিক্ষা-বিষয়ক মাসিকপত্র, প্রকাশকাল—অগ্রহায়ণ ১৩৪৭, সম্পাদিকা—স্বর্ণপ্রভা সেন, অধ্যাপক প্রিয়রঞ্জন সেনের সহধর্মিণী। ১ম সংখ্যায় “আমাদের কথা”র সম্পাদিকা লিখিতেছেন :—“শিক্ষার পরিকল্পনা, তাহার আলোচনা ও বিচার, নিত্যকালের ব্যাপার, সাময়িক উত্তেজনার ফল নহে। আমাদের দেশে যাহারা এ বিষয়ে দেখিয়াছেন ও ভাবিয়াছেন তাহাদের সাধনার ফল আমরা কিছদ্ব পরিমাণে পাইতে পারিব, এবং তাহাতে আমাদের চিন্তাও পরিণতি লাভ করিবে, এই আশায় ‘শিক্ষা’ পত্রিকা প্রকাশ আরম্ভ করা গেল।” ‘শিক্ষা’ এখনও চলিতেছে।

‘মেয়েদের কথা’ : মাসিকপত্র, প্রকাশকাল—বৈশাখ ১৩৪৮, সম্পাদিকা—কল্যাণী সেন, এম.এ। পত্রিকা-প্রচারের প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য :—“বঙ্গবাসী ও প্রবাসী সকল বাঙালী মহিলাদের পরস্পরের সঙ্গে যোগস্থাপন ও পরস্পরের সহায়তায় আদর্শ ও কল্পনার উন্নতি।” ইহার পরমায়ু চারি বৎসর।

‘জাগরণ’ : ত্রৈমাসিক পত্র, বাঁকুড়া তরুণী সঙ্ঘ হইতে ১৩৪৯ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে প্রকাশিত। সম্পাদিকা—সদুলতানা বেগম; সহ-সম্পাদিকা—ইরা রাহা। দেড় বৎসরে ছয় সংখ্যা বাহির হইয়াছিল।

‘অর্চনা’ : এই সুপ্রাচীন মাসিকপত্রের ৪০শ বর্ষ, ৪র্থ সংখ্যা (জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৫১) হইতে চিত্রিতা দেবী অন্যতর সম্পাদক নিযুক্ত হইয়াছেন।

‘মাতৃভূমি’ : এই মাসিক পত্রিকার ৮ম বর্ষের ১ম সংখ্যা (মাঘ ১৩৫২) হইতে অমিতা দত্ত মজুমদার, এম.এ. সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করেন।

‘পরিভ্রম’ : ঋতু-পত্রিকা; প্রথম সংখ্যার প্রকাশকাল—গ্রীষ্ম ১৩৫৩। সম্পাদিকা—কল্যাণী মদুখোপাধ্যায়। চারি সংখ্যা প্রকাশিত হইয়া ইহা বিলুপ্ত হয়।

‘মহিলা’ : “মহিলাদের একমাত্র মদুখপত্র।” প্রকাশকাল—আষাঢ় ১৩৫৪, সম্পাদিকা—বীণা গুহ, এম.এ। পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য :—“মহিলাতে রসসাহিত্যের পরিবেশন করিতে গল্প উপন্যাস কবিতা ভ্রমণবৃত্তান্ত ও প্রবন্ধাদি, যেমন সব কাগজে থাকে, তেমন থাকিবে—অধিকন্তু থাকিবে মেয়েদের জ্ঞাতব্য ও ব্যবহারিক দিক, যাহা বর্তমানে অন্য কোনও পত্র-পত্রিকায় থাকে না।” দ্বিতীয় বর্ষ হইতে কথাসাহিত্যিক নারায়ণচন্দ্র গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের পত্নী—আশা দেবী, এম.এ. ‘মহিলা’র সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করিয়াছেন। “সম্পাদনা পরিষৎএর সভানেত্রী শ্রীমতী অনুরূপা দেবী।”

‘মহিলা-মহল’ : “মহিলা পরিচালিত ও সম্পাদিত অ-দলীয় পাক্ষিক পত্রিকা।” প্রকাশকাল—১ আষাঢ় ১৩৫৪; সম্পাদিকা—অঞ্জলি সরকার, এম.এ., কমলা মদুখোপাধ্যায়, এম.এ., ও গীতা বোস। “শুদ্ধ সাহিত্যের পসরা নিয়ে ভাবরাজ্যে বিচরণ করবার জন্যে ‘মহিলা-মহল’ের আবির্ভাব নয়—মেয়েদের জীবনের সত্যিকারের যে সব সমস্যা ক্রমশঃ জটিল হয়ে ক্ষয়রোগের মতো মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য, পারিবারিক শান্তি ও দাম্পত্য-জীবনকে নষ্ট করছে তার সমাধান করা এবং সমাজ-জীবন থেকে নানাবিধ কু-আচার ও কু-নীতিকে বিদেয় করিতে ‘মহিলা-মহল’ কৃতসংকল্প।” ১৩৫৫ সালের ১লা আষাঢ়-সংখ্যা হইতে অঞ্জলি সরকার একাই সম্পাদিকা হন। ১৩৫৬ সালের ১লা ভাদ্র হইতে গীতা বোস ‘মহিলা-মহল’ সম্পাদন করিয়া আসিতেছেন।

‘সংগঠন’ : পাক্ষিক পত্রিকা। প্রকাশকাল—২ প্রাবণ ১৩৫৪, সম্পাদক—শচীন্দ্রনাথ মিত্র। উদ্দেশ্য—“জাতির এবং ব্যক্তির অন্তর্নিহিত শক্তির ও সংঘর্ষের যথাযথ বিকাশে যে রচনা সাহায্য করিবে ও যে রচনার প্রয়োজন থাকিবে তাহাই এই পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হইবে। ‘সংগঠন’ের বিশেষ অঙ্গ হইবে ‘চিন্তায়সি,’ সংবাদ সংগ্রহ, গঠনকর্ম-বিবরণ, কর্ম্মীসংবাদ, জাতীয় সংগীত ও স্বরলিপি, জাতীয় পুস্তক পরিচয় ও প্রশ্ন উত্তর। এতদ্ভিন্ন গঠনকর্ম-বিষয়ক নানা প্রশ্ন ও সমস্যা সম্বন্ধে কর্ম্মীগণের ও বিশেষজ্ঞগণের প্রবন্ধ প্রকাশিত হইবে এবং গঠনকর্ম্মীগণ যে ভাবধারা দেশে সঞ্চারিত করিতে চাহেন তাহার দ্রুত প্রচারের জন্য উপযুক্ত প্রচারপদ্ধতি ও তাহার জন্য বিশেষভাবে লিখিত গান, নাটক ইত্যাদি প্রকাশিত হইবে।” ১৯৪৭ সনের ১লা অক্টোবর শচীন্দ্রনাথ শোচনীয়ভাবে নিহত হইলে তৎপত্নী অংশুভাগী মিত্র (বেথুন কলেজের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী) ৫ম সংখ্যা (আশ্বিন ১৩৫৪) হইতে ‘সংগঠন’ পরিচালন করিয়া আসিতেছেন। পরবর্ত্তী অগ্রহায়ণ মাসে প্রকাশিত ৭ম সংখ্যা হইতে ‘সংগঠন’ মাসিকপত্রে রূপান্তরিত হইয়াছে।

‘বেগম’ : মুসলিম নারীদের দ্বারা লিখিত ও পরিচালিত সচিত্র সাপ্তাহিক। প্রকাশকাল—৩ প্রাবণ ১৩৫৪ (২০-৭-১৯৪৭), সম্পাদিকা—নূরজাহান বেগম ও সন্দিয়া কামাল। উদ্দেশ্য—“নারীর স্বর্বাঙ্গীণ উন্নতি ও মঙ্গল তথা দেশের ও দশের উন্নতি ও মঙ্গলসাধন।” প্রথম বর্ষের ১২শ সংখ্যা (২ নবেম্বর) হইতে নূরজাহান বেগম একক ‘বেগম’ সম্পাদন করিয়া আসিতেছেন।

‘তরুণের স্বপ্ন’ : সচিত্র সাপ্তাহিক, প্রকাশকাল—২৩ জানুয়ারি ১৯৪৮ (নেতাজীর জন্মতিথি), সম্পাদিকা—মালবিকা দত্ত। উদ্দেশ্য—“সাহিত্য, সংস্কৃতি, রাজনীতি ও সমাজ-নীতি; সব কিছ্ মিলিয়ে তরুণ মনের বিভিন্ন চিন্তাধারার যে সমন্বিত রূপ, হাজার হাজার তরুণজীবন স্বদেশের উন্নতিকল্পে যে স্বপ্নজাল সৃষ্টি করেন মনে মনে তারই বহিঃপ্রকাশ দেখা যাবে ‘তরুণের স্বপ্ন’ের পাতায়।” বর্ত্তমানে ‘তরুণের স্বপ্ন’ মাসিকপত্রে পরিণত হইয়াছে।

‘উজ্জ্বল ভারত’ : মাসিক পত্রিকা, প্রকাশকাল—মাঘ ১৩৫৪; সম্পাদক—পদ্রুঘোষমানন্দ অবধূত (বরিশালের শরৎকুমার ঘোষ) ও সহ-সম্পাদক রেণু মিত্র, এম.এ। উদ্দেশ্য—“ভারতবর্ষ আজ ব্রিটিশকবলমুক্ত। এই মুক্ত ভারতকে মথিত করিয়া একটি উজ্জ্বল ভারত এবং তাহার অনুপ্রেরণায় একটি ‘এক জগৎ’ (One World) গড়িয়া তুলিবার উদ্দেশ্যে সনাতন আর্থ্য শাস্ত্রের প্রগতিশীল ও তেজস্বী ব্যাখ্যানসাহিত্য সৃষ্টি এবং তাহারই ভিত্তি-ভূমিতে বাস্তবের দেশে, সর্ব্ববিধ সংগঠনক্ষেত্রে তাহার কর্ম্মগত ছন্দের ও প্রয়োগ-কৌশলের সম্যক্ আন্বেদন করাই এই উজ্জ্বল ভারত পত্রের পরম প্রয়োজন।” ‘উজ্জ্বল ভারত’ এখনও চলিতেছে।

‘ঘরে বাইরে’ : মহিলা আত্মরক্ষা সমিতির মাসিক মুদ্রপত্র। প্রকাশকাল—আশ্বিন ১৩৫৫, সম্পাদিকা—ক্ষিতীশপ্রসাদ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের সহধর্ম্মিণী মঞ্জুশ্রী দেবী। পত্রিকা-প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য—“আত্মরক্ষা সমিতি সেই মেয়েদেরই প্রতিষ্ঠান, যারা সমাজে, সংসারে, অর্থনীতি আর রাজনীতি ক্ষেত্রে আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠা পায় না কোনদিন; বঞ্চিত হয় সকল রকম অধিকার থেকেই। এই মেয়েদের সংগত অধিকারের দাবী নিয়েই আত্মরক্ষা সমিতির আন্দোলন। যে সমাজ এবং শাসনব্যবস্থা নারীর শক্তিকে করে অপচয়, বঞ্চিত করে তাকে মানুষের অধিকার থেকে—সে ব্যবস্থাকে ‘সুশাসন’ বা সুবিচার বলে মেনে নেয়নি আত্মরক্ষা সমিতি, নেবেও না কোনদিন। এই বঞ্চিত মানুষের কথাকেই ‘ঘরে বাইরে’ পেঁাছে, দেবে

ঘরে ঘরে। এদেরই বঞ্চিত জীবনের লাঞ্ছিত চেহারাকে কথায়-কাহিনীতে ফুটিয়ে তুলবে ‘ঘরে বাইরে’।.....‘ঘরে বাইরে’র দরজা খোলা থাকবে দেশ-বিদেশের বোনদের জন্যও সাগ্রহ সমাদরে। সমস্যা ও সংগ্রামে যাদের মিল আছে, সমাধানের পথে যারা অগ্রণী, ভৌগোলিক সীমারেখা টেনে নাম তাদের বিদেশী হলেও, দূরের মানুষ নয় তারা। এমনি আপন জনের দিকে বন্ধুত্বের হাত বাড়াতে সঙ্কোচ করবে না ‘ঘরে বাইরে’।” চার পাঁচ সংখ্যা প্রকাশের পর সরকার পত্রিকাখানির প্রচার রহিত করেন। অতঃপর মঞ্জুশ্রী দেবী ১৩৫৬ সালের জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাসে ‘জন্মা’ নামে মাসিক পত্রিকা প্রকাশ করিলে তাহাও সরকারের কোপ-দৃষ্টিতে পতিত হয়।

‘শ্রীমতী’ : সচিত্র মাসিক পত্রিকা। প্রকাশকাল—কার্তিক ১৩৫৫, সম্পাদিকা—ডাঃ শ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ মৈত্রের কন্যা মীরা চৌধুরী। পত্রিকা প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্য—“আমরা ভুলে যাই যে দেশের শাসনতন্ত্রের যে পরিবর্তনই আসুক না কেন, আমাদের বাড়ীঘরকে সৌন্দর্য ও সুস্বাসামণ্ডিত করবার, আমাদের ছেলেমেয়েদের সুস্থ শিক্ষিত ও যথাযথভাবে গড়ে তোলবার, আমাদের পারিবারিক জীবনকে প্রীতি ও স্নেহের ভিত্তিতে স্থাপন করার, রুচি ও কলার অনুশীলন করার, পুরোনো-কুসংস্কার থেকে মুক্ত হয়ে এগিয়ে চলার প্রয়োজনীয়তা কখনও যাবে না। এদের দাবী কমবে না বরং বাড়বে। রাজনীতিক বা অর্থনীতিক ক্ষেত্রে যত এগিয়ে যাই-ই না কেন, আমাদের পারিবারিক জীবন যদি অসুস্থ, অস্বস্তি ও কুরূচিপূর্ণ হয়, তাহলে অন্য সব উন্নতি স্থায়ী হবে না; তাসের ঘরের মত ভেঙে পড়বে। এ সম্বন্ধে শৃঙ্খল সজাগ নয়, আমাদের সক্রিয় হতে হবে। এই পত্রিকা যদি সামান্যভাবেও সৈদিকে সাহায্য করতে পারে, তবে তার সার্থকতা নিশ্চয়ই আছে।” ‘শ্রীমতী’ এখনও সুদৃষ্টভাবে পরিচালিত হইতেছে।

‘শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ’ : “ভাগবতীকথা পত্রিকা”। এই মাসিকপত্রের নবম সংখ্যা (শ্রাবণ ১৩৫৬) হইতে সম্পাদন-ভার গ্রহণ করিয়াছেন অনুরূপা দেবী।

‘সুদলতানা’ : “পূর্বা-পাকিস্থানের সর্বপ্রথম মহিলা সাপ্তাহিক।” প্রকাশকাল—১৪ জানুয়ারি ১৯৪৯, সম্পাদিকা—বেগম সুফিয়া কামাল ও জাহানারা আরজু। উদ্দেশ্য—বাংলার মহিলা সমাজের উন্নয়ন। পত্রিকাখানি দীর্ঘজীবী হইতে পারে নাই; ইহার শেষ সংখ্যা প্রকাশিত হয়—২৯এ এপ্রিল।

‘নওবাহার’ : মাসিক পত্রিকা। প্রকাশকাল—ভাদ্র ১৩৫৬, সম্পাদিকা—কবি গোলাম মোস্তাফার পত্নী মাহফুজা খাতুন। উদ্দেশ্য—“এ নিছক একখানি সাহিত্য-পত্র। ইহাতে থাকিবে সত্য সুন্দর ও মঙ্গলের প্রকাশ। বাস্তব রাজনীতির কোন আলোচনা ইহাতে থাকিবে না, তবে রাজনৈতিক চিন্তা ও দর্শন—যাহা সাহিত্যের অন্তর্ভুক্ত—তাহার আলোচনায় বাধা নাই। পাকিস্তান-বিরোধী কোন বিষয়বস্তুও ‘নওবাহারে’ স্থান পাইবে না।”

‘মানসী’ : “পূর্বাঞ্চলের অভিজাত মাসিক পত্রিকা,” পাবনা হইতে ১৩৫৭ আশ্বিন মাসে প্রকাশিত। সম্পাদিকা—কুমারী জ্যোৎস্নারাগী দত্ত, সহঃ-সম্পাদিকা অগ্নিমা গুপ্তা।



এক নিশ্বাসে সাতকাণ্ড রামায়ণ শেষ করিলাম। আমার বিশ্বাস আছে, বাঙালী মেয়েদের সমগ্র সাহিত্যিক প্রচেষ্টার ইতিহাস একদিন উন্মীচিত হইবে।

বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের কথা

শ্রীযোগেশচন্দ্র বাগল

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আমাদের দেশে শিক্ষার রেওয়াজ কোন-না-কোন আকারে প্রাচীন কাল হইতে বরাবর চালু ছিল। এই শিক্ষা হইতে নারীগণও বাদ পড়িতেন না। কিন্তু মুসলমান আমলে নানা কারণে হিন্দু সমাজ কুসংস্কারিত অবলম্বন করিতে বাধ্য হওয়ায় নারীদের উন্নতিরও বিশেষ অপহব ঘটে। অষ্টাদশ শতাব্দীর শেষ ও ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রথমে রাষ্ট্রে পদুন্নতনের স্থলে নূতন জাতির কতৃষ্ণ প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। এ সময় শিক্ষা ব্যাপারেও নানারূপ ওলট-পালট হইল। কিন্তু স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রচলনের বিশেষ কোন সুযোগ তখনও দেখা দেয় নাই। হিন্দু সমাজের উচ্চ স্তরের ভিতরে স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রচলন যে একেবারেই ছিল না তাহা নহে, তবে তাহা প্রকাশ্য বিদ্যালয়ের মধ্য দিয়া সমাজের সর্বস্তরে পৌঁছাইবার উপায় ছিল না।

ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রথম পঁচিশ বৎসরে এদেশে উন্নত ধরনের বাংলা ও ইংরেজী বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। এ সকল বিদ্যালয়ে ছাত্রগণ এই দুই ভাষার মাধ্যমে বিভিন্ন বিদ্যা আয়ত্ত করিতে থাকে। ইউরোপীয় মিশনারীরা তাঁহাদের স্ত্রীগণের সাহায্যে হিন্দু বালিকাদের জন্য কলিকাতায় ও উপকণ্ঠে প্রকাশ্য বালিকা বিদ্যালয় স্থাপনের আয়োজন করিতে থাকেন। এই বিষয়ে সাহায্য করিবার জন্য বিলাত হইতে কুমারী এ্যান কুকও প্রেরিত হইয়াছিলেন। এইরূপে এখানে বহু বালিকা বিদ্যালয় স্থাপিত হয়। উচ্চ শ্রেণীর হিন্দু কন্যাগণ এসকল বিদ্যালয়ে প্রেরিত না হইলেও প্রথম প্রথম রাজা রাধাকান্ত দেব, রাজা বৈদ্যনাথ রায় প্রমুখ হিন্দু প্রধানেরা তাঁহাদের প্রচেষ্টায় বিশেষভাবে সাহায্য করিয়াছিলেন। কিন্তু যখন দেখা গেল, এই বিদ্যালয়গুলিকে খ্রীষ্টধর্ম প্রচারের উপায় করিয়া তোলা হইতেছে তখন তাঁহারা এরূপ প্রচেষ্টায় সহায়তা করিতে বিরত হইলেন। তথাকথিত নিম্ন শ্রেণীর ছাত্রীরা এবং এদেশীয় খ্রীষ্টানদের কন্যাগণ ম্বারাই বিদ্যালয়গুলি পূর্ণ হইতে লাগিল।

কিন্তু আধুনিক শিক্ষা প্রবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে এদেশবাসীদের মনোভাবেও কতকটা পরিবর্তন দেখা দিল। ইহার পূর্বেই কিন্তু রাজা রামমোহন রায়ের সতীদাহের বিরোধী আন্দোলনের ফলে নারীসমাজের দুর্দশার দিকে অনেকের নজর পড়ে। হিন্দু কলেজে শিক্ষিত ছাত্রগণ প্রকাশ্যভাবে স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তার বিষয় আলোচনা করিতে সুরু করিয়া দেন। স্কুল কলেজের ছাত্রদের মধ্যে এ বিষয়ে উৎকৃষ্ট প্রবন্ধাদি রচনার জন্য পুরস্কার ঘোষিত হয়। বেঙ্গল ব্রিটিশ ইন্ডিয়া সোসাইটির পক্ষে রামগোপাল ঘোষ প্রমুখ নেতারা স্ত্রীশিক্ষা প্রচারের জন্য পরিকল্পনা রচনাও প্রবৃত্ত হন। উত্তরপাড়ার জমিদার জয়কৃষ্ণ মুখোপাধ্যায় ও রাজকৃষ্ণ মুখোপাধ্যায় ভ্রাতৃদ্বয় তথায় বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য গবর্ন-মেণ্টের নিকট একটি প্রস্তাবও ১৮৪৫ সনে পাঠান। ওদিকে বারাসতে কালীকৃষ্ণ মিত্র এবং নবীনকৃষ্ণ মিত্র সেখানকার ইংরেজী স্কুলের প্রধান শিক্ষক হিন্দু কলেজের প্রাক্তন ছাত্র প্যারীচরণ সরকারের সহযোগিতায় ১৮৪৭ সনেই একটি অবৈতনিক বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা করিলেন। তখনও পর্যন্ত কিন্তু রাজধানী কলিকাতায় ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ প্রকাশ্য বালিকা

বিদ্যালয় স্থাপিত হয় নাই। তবে শিক্ষিত সাধারণের মনোভাব যে ক্রমশঃ ইহার অনুকূল হইতেছিল তাহা ক্রমেই বুঝা যাইতেছিল।

এমন সময়, ১৮৪৮ সনের এপ্রিল মাসে জন এলিয়ট ড্রিস্কওয়াটার বেথুন বড়লাটের পরিষদের আইন-সদস্য হইয়া এদেশে আসিলেন। তিনি বিলাতে আইন ব্যবসায় প্রসিদ্ধি লাভ করেন। কবি ও সাহিত্যিক বলিয়াও তাঁহার বেশ খ্যাতি ছিল। ভারতবাসীদের প্রতি তিনি সহানুভূতিশীল ছিলেন। তিনি এখানকার শিক্ষা-ব্যবস্থা সম্পর্কে জ্ঞানলাভের জন্য নানারূপ পুস্তক, সরকারী রিপোর্ট প্রভৃতি পড়িতেন। তিনি বলিয়াছেন, ভারতীয় নারী জাতির মধ্যে শিক্ষার অভাব দেখিয়া স্বদেশে থাকিতেই তিনি বিশেষ দৃষ্টি অনুভব করিতেন।

বেথুন এদেশে আসিবার পর আইন-সচিবের পদাধিকার বলে শিক্ষা-সমাজের ("The Council of Education") সভাপতি হইলেন।^{১৮} রামগোপাল ঘোষও ১৮৪৮ সনে ইহার অন্যতম সদস্য নিযুক্ত হইয়াছিলেন। উভয়েই স্ত্রীশিক্ষার পক্ষপাতী, এ কারণে উভয়ের মধ্যে স্বভাবতঃই এ বিষয়ে আলাপ-আলোচনা হইয়া বস্তুতঃ বেথুনও স্বীকার করিয়াছেন যে, তাঁহার বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার পূর্বে সকলের চেয়ে এবিং সবার আগে রামগোপাল ঘোষের নিকট হইতেই তিনি বিশেষ উৎসাহ ও সাহায্য পাইয়াছিলেন। প্রকাশ, বেথুন শিক্ষা-সমাজের সভাপতি রূপে বারাসতের সরকারী বিদ্যালয় পরিদর্শন করিতে গিয়া সেখানকার বালিকা বিদ্যালয়টি দেখিয়াছিলেন এবং এই বিদ্যালয় হইতেই কলিকাতায়ও একটি প্রকাশ্য বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য অনুপ্রেরণা লাভ করেন।

যাহা হউক, রামগোপাল ঘোষের সহায়তায় বেথুন বিদ্যালয় স্থাপনের আয়োজন করিতে থাকেন। রামগোপালের সতীর্থ বন্ধু দক্ষিণারঞ্জনের বৈঠকখানা বাটীতে বিদ্যালয় স্থাপন সম্ভব কিনা তত্ত্বজন্য দুইজনেই ঐ স্থান পরিদর্শন করিতে যান। তখন দক্ষিণারঞ্জন ঐ স্থানে অনুপস্থিত ছিলেন। পরে তিনি এ বিষয় শুনিয়া প্রস্তাবিত বিদ্যালয়ের জন্য বিনা ভাড়ায় ঐ বাটী ছাড়িয়া দিতে স্বীকৃত হন। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তিনি বেথুনকে লিখিয়া জানান যে, তাঁহার পাঁচ হাজার টাকা মূল্যের গ্রন্থসমূহ এই বিদ্যালয়কে দিবেন, আর এই বিদ্যালয়ের স্থায়ী আবাসস্থলের জন্য মির্জাপুরের পাঁচ বিঘা জমিও তিনি অর্পণ করিতে প্রতিশ্রুত হইলেন। বেথুন এরকম সাধু প্রস্তাব সানন্দে গ্রহণ করিলেন। রামগোপালও এদিকে আত্মীয় ও বন্ধুগণকে বেথুনের নিকটে আনিয়া অঙ্গীকার করাইয়া লইলেন যে, তাঁহার প্রস্তাবিত বিদ্যালয়ে নিজ নিজ কন্যাদের পাঠাইতে স্বিরুদ্ধি করিবেন না।

প্রারম্ভিক আয়োজনাদি সম্পূর্ণ হইলে বেথুন একুশটি মাত্র ছাত্রী লইয়া ১৮৪৯ সনের ৭ই মে দক্ষিণারঞ্জনের শিমুলিয়াস্থ বৈঠকখানা বাটীতে বিনা আড়ম্বরে বালিকা বিদ্যালয় খুলিলেন। এই দিন উপস্থিত জনগণের সম্মুখে তিনি যে একটি বক্তৃতা করেন তাহা যেমন মনোহর, তেমন নানা তথ্যে পরিপূর্ণ। রাজা রাধাকান্ত দেব, প্রসন্নকুমার ঠাকুর প্রমুখ ব্যক্তিগণ স্ত্রীশিক্ষার বিশেষ পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন, তথাপি বিদ্যালয়ের প্রতি তাঁহাদের মনোভাব সম্যক জ্ঞাত না থাকায় তিনি তাঁহাদের আমন্ত্রণ করেন নাই। পাছে বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা একটি আড়ম্বরপূর্ণ ব্যাপার বলিয়া আখ্যাত হয় এই আশঙ্কায় তিনি ইংরেজ ভদ্রমহোদয়

ও মহিলাগণকেও আহ্বানে বিরত হইয়াছিলেন। ইহার পরে তিনি বলেন যে, বিদ্যালয়ে ভদ্র-বালিকাগণকেই মাত্র গ্রহণ করা হইবে। এখানে সকল বিষয়ই শিক্ষা দেওয়া হইবে ছাত্রীদের মাতৃভাষা বাংলার মাধ্যমে এবং বিনা বেতনে। পিতামাতা বা অভিভাবকের অনুমতি ব্যতীত কাহাকেও ইংরেজী শিখানো বিধি-বাহির্ভূত। মেয়েদের উপযোগী সীবন, বুনন প্রভৃতি শিক্ষা দেওয়া যাইবে, আর এ সকলের শিক্ষাদাত্রী হইবেন মিসেস রিডস্‌ডেল। ছাত্রীদের বিদ্যালয়ে আনয়ন ও গৃহে প্রেরণের জন্য ঘোড়ার গাড়ীরও তিনি ব্যবস্থা করিবেন।

বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা সম্পর্কে এখানে আরও দুই-একটি বিষয় লক্ষণীয়। এখানকার প্রথম একুশ জন ছাত্রীর মধ্যে ছিলেন পণ্ডিত মদনমোহন তর্কালঙ্কারের ভুবনমালা ও কুন্দমালা নাম্নী দুই কন্যা। এরূপ প্রকাশ, তিনিই সর্বাগ্রে কন্যাদের এখানে পাঠাইতে স্বীকৃত হইয়াছিলেন। মদনমোহন বিদ্যালয়ে অবৈতনিক ভাবে ছাত্রীদের কিছুকাল পড়াইয়াছিলেন। তাহাদেরই উপলক্ষ্য করিয়া তাঁহার বিখ্যাত বাংলা বর্ণমালা রচিত হয়। প্রতিষ্ঠাকালে বিদ্যালয়টির কি নাম ছিল তাহা লইয়াও বিতর্ক দেখা যায়। ‘সংবাদ প্রভাকর’ ও ‘সম্বাদ ভাস্কর’ দুই-ই স্ত্রীশিক্ষার পক্ষপাতী এবং বেথুন-প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিদ্যালয়টির সমর্থক ছিলেন। প্রথমেস্ত সংবাদপত্রখানি প্রায় এক মাস কাল যাবৎ এই বিদ্যালয়টিকে ‘ভিক্টোরিয়া বালিকা বিদ্যালয়’ নামে আখ্যাত করেন। পরে তৎকর্তৃক এই নাম পরিত্যক্ত হয়। বেথুন তাঁহার প্রতিষ্ঠাকালীন বক্তৃতায় ইহাকে ‘ক্যালকাটা ফিমেল স্কুল’ বলিয়া উক্তি করেন। ‘সম্বাদ ভাস্কর’ও এই নাম আমরা দেখিতে পাই। বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার প্রায় এগার মাস পরে বেথুন বড়লাটের নিকট এদেশের স্ত্রীশিক্ষার অবস্থা বর্ণনা করিয়া একখানি পত্র লেখেন। পত্রখানির শেষ ভাগে তিনি এই অনুরোধ করেন যে, বিদ্যালয়ের নামের সঙ্গੇ ‘ভিক্টোরিয়া’ নামটি সংযোগের জন্য বিলাতীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতি বড়লাট যেন আনাইয়া দেন। এই অনুমতি পাওয়া যায় নাই। এই সব বিষয় বিবেচনা করিলে মনে হয় ‘ভিক্টোরিয়া’ নাম গ্রহণ সম্বন্ধে আলাপ-আলোচনা হইলেও এই নাম কখনও সরকারীভাবে গৃহীত হয় নাই, ‘সম্বাদ প্রভাকর’ নিজ দায়িত্বেই কয়েক বার এই নামে বিদ্যালয়টিকে অভিহিত করিয়াছিলেন।

বেথুন কর্তৃক বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার পনের দিনের মধ্যেই কলিকাতায় রাজা রাধাকান্ত দেব নিজ শোভাবাজার রাজ-বাটীতে একটি বালিকা বিদ্যালয় স্থাপন করিলেন। নবদর্শে বারাসত বালিকা বিদ্যালয়টিও পুনর্গঠিত হইল। শ্রদ্ধাসাগর, নিবন্ধই প্রভৃতি কয়েকটি স্থলেও অল্প কালের ব্যবধানে বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। উত্তরপাড়ার জমিদার-ভ্রাতৃস্বয় পদ্মনরায় শিক্ষা-সমাজের নিকট তাঁহাদের পরিকল্পনা পেশ করেন, কিন্তু কলিকাতায় স্কুলটির ভাগ্য কিরূপ দাঁড়ায় তাহা না বুঝিয়া এইরূপ কার্যে হস্তক্ষেপ করা সমীচীন হইবে না বলিয়া শিক্ষা-সমাজ মত প্রকাশ করেন।

যে-সব অঞ্চলে বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হইল তাহার কোন কোন স্থলে, বিশেষ করিয়া বারাসতে স্থানীয় লোকেরা বিদ্যালয়ের কর্তৃপক্ষের উপর নানারূপ অত্যাচার উৎপীড়ন করিতে থাকে। কলিকাতায়ও বিরোধী দল স্থানীয় বিদ্যালয়টির বিরুদ্ধে এরূপ আন্দোলন চালায় যে, ঐক সময়ে ইহার ছাত্রসংখ্যা কমিয়া সাত জনে দাঁড়ায়। কোন কোন স্থানে এরূপও ঘটনা হইতে থাকে যে, স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রতি গবর্নমেন্টের কোনরূপ সহানুভূতি নাই। পদ্বোর্ধ্বাঙ্কিত পত্রে বেথুন এ সকল বিষয়েরও উল্লেখ করিয়া বড়লাটকে এই অনুরোধ জানাইলেন যে, গবর্নমেন্ট যে স্ত্রীশিক্ষার প্রকৃত সমর্থক এই মর্মে স্থানীয় সরকারের মারফত ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটগণের নিকট যেন অবিলম্বে এক বিজ্ঞপ্তি বা সাকুলার প্রচারিত হয়। এই প্রস্তাব অনুসারে এক বিজ্ঞপ্তি শীঘ্রই প্রচারিত হইল। ইহাতে লোকের অত্যাচার কমিল বটে,

কিন্তু বালিকা বিদ্যালয়গুলি গবর্নমেন্টের নিকট হইতে কোন দিন যে আর্থিক সাহায্য পাইতে পারে এরূপ ইঙ্গিত বিজ্ঞপ্তির মধ্যে মিলিল না।

মির্জাপুরে দক্ষিণারঞ্জন-প্রদত্ত জমির পার্শ্ব বেথুনও সমপরিমাণ একখণ্ড ভূমি ক্রয় করিলেন। কিন্তু মির্জাপুর তখন কলিকাতার উপকণ্ঠ, ভদ্রপল্লী হইতে বহু দূরে। এ কারণ হেদুয়ার পশ্চিমদিকে বাংলা-সরকারের যে একখণ্ড জমি ছিল, নিজ এবং দক্ষিণারঞ্জনের উক্ত জমির বিনিময়ে বেথুন ইহা হস্তগত করিয়া লইলেন। ১৮৫০ সনের ৬ই নবেম্বর মহাসমারোহে এই ভূমিখণ্ডের উপরে ভূমি-হস্তান্তর এবং বিদ্যালয়-গৃহের ভিত্তি-প্রস্তর স্থাপন কার্য সমাধা হইল। ডেপুটি গবর্নরের পত্নী লেডী লিটলার এই দিনটিকে স্মরণীয় করিবার জন্য স্ত্রী-শিক্ষা তথা স্ত্রী-স্বাধীনতার প্রতীকস্বরূপ ভূমিখণ্ডের এককোণে একটি অশোকবৃক্ষ রোপণ করেন। এই উপলক্ষে বেথুন যে সারগর্ভ বক্তৃতা করেন তাহা আমাদের দেশের স্ত্রী-শিক্ষার ইতিহাসে স্মরণীয় হইয়া থাকিবে।

বেথুন স্বয়ং এই বিদ্যালয়-গৃহ নিৰ্ম্মাণের অধিকাংশ ব্যয়ভার বহন করেন। উত্তরপাড়ার জমিদার জয়কৃষ্ণ মুরখোপাধ্যায় এই জন্য দশ হাজার টাকা দিয়াছিলেন। বেথুন বিদ্যালয়-গৃহের নিৰ্ম্মাণ-কার্য সম্পন্ন হইতে দেখিয়া যাইতে পারেন নাই। ১৮৫১ সনের ১২ই আগষ্ট তিনি কলিকাতায় দেহত্যাগ করেন। তিনি স্ত্রী-শিক্ষার এতদূর পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন যে, এদেশে স্থিত অনন্য গ্রন্থ হাজার টাকা মূল্যের যাবতীয় অস্থাবর সম্পত্তি তিনি বিদ্যালয়টির জন্য উইল করিয়া দিয়া যান।

বেথুনের জীবিতকালেই বিদ্যালয়টি কিছুদিনের জন্য গোলদীঘির দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব কোণে একটি বাড়ীতে উঠিয়া যায়। বেথুনই শৃঙ্খল নিয়মিতভাবে স্কুলে যাইতেন না, বড়লাট ডালহৌসী-পত্নীও প্রায়ই বিদ্যালয় পরিদর্শনে যাইতেন। বিদ্যালয়টির উন্নতির প্রতি তিনি এবং স্বয়ং বড়লাটও বিশেষ অবহিত ছিলেন। বিদ্যালয়টির জন্য বেথুন একজন উৎসাহী কর্ম্মী পাইয়াছিলেন পণ্ডিত ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগরের মধ্যে। বিদ্যালয়টি পরিচালনায় তাঁহার কৃতিত্বের কথা আমরা একটু পরেই জানিতে পারিব। বেথুনের মৃত্যুর অব্যবহিত পূর্বে বিদ্যালয়ের ছাত্রীসংখ্যা হইয়াছিল আশী জন। মহর্ষি দেবেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর তাঁহার কন্যা সোদামিনী দেবীকে বিদ্যালয়ে পাঠাইলেন। অন্যান্য বহু নেতৃস্থানীয় ব্যক্তিও নিজ নিজ কন্যা এখানে ভর্তি করিয়া দিতে উৎসুক হইলেন। এই সময়ে মহারাজা কালীকৃষ্ণ কামিটির সভাপতিরূপে ইহার সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে যুক্ত হন। ১৮৫১ সনের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে স্কুলটি নতুন গৃহে উঠিয়া আসে।

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বিদ্যালয় পরিচালনার ব্যয় প্রতি মাসে সাত-আট শত টাকা পড়িত। বেথুন যতদিন জীবিত ছিলেন, নিজেই সমুদয় খরচ চালাইতেন। তাঁহার মৃত্যুর পর বড়লাট লর্ড ডালহৌসী বিদ্যালয়ের সম্পূর্ণ ভার স্বহস্তে গ্রহণ করেন। ১৮৫৬ সনের মার্চ মাসে ভারত-ত্যাগ পর্যন্ত তিনি এই ভার বহন করিয়াছিলেন। তিনি কোর্ট অব্ ডিরেক্টর্সের সঙ্গে লেখালেখি করিয়া এই ব্যবস্থা করিয়া যান যে, তাঁহার কার্যকাল অন্তে বিদ্যালয় পরিচালনা-ভার স্বয়ং ভারত-সরকার গ্রহণ করিবেন। কাজেও তাহাই হইল। তাঁহার ভারতবর্ষ ত্যাগের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সরকার ইহার দায়িত্ব লইলেন। সরকার পক্ষে সেক্রেটারী স্যার সিসিল বীডনের উপর এতৎসম্পর্কে সমস্ত ব্যবস্থা করিবার ভার পড়িল। বিদ্যালয়টি সন্দর্ভপরিচালনার

জন্য দেশীয় গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তিদের লইয়া সরকার তাঁহারই পরামর্শ মত একটি ম্যানেজিং কমিটি বা অধ্যক্ষ-সভা এই বৎসর সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে গঠন করিলেন। স্যার সিসিল বীডন স্বয়ং হইলেন এই কমিটির সভাপতি, আর পণ্ডিত ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর সম্পাদক। রাজা কালীকৃষ্ণ বাহাদুর, রাজা প্রতাপচন্দ্র সিংহ, রমাপ্রসাদ রায়, কাশীপ্রসাদ ঘোষ প্রমুখ দশজন ইহার সদস্য হইলেন। বীডন ও বিদ্যাসাগরের স্বাক্ষরে বেথুন-নির্দেশিত বিদ্যালয়ের আদর্শ ও পাঠ্য-বিষয়াদি সম্পর্কে একটি বিজ্ঞপ্তিও বাহির হইল।

বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় ১৮৬৮ সন পর্যন্ত সম্পাদকরূপে বিদ্যালয়ের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎভাবে যুক্ত ছিলেন। বিদ্যালয়টি ক্রমে বালিকাদের একটি আদর্শ প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ে পরিণত হয়। ১৮৬২ সনের ১৫ই ডিসেম্বর অধ্যক্ষ-সভার পক্ষে গবর্নমেন্টের নিকট বিদ্যাসাগর যে বার্ষিক বিবরণ পেশ করেন তাহা হইতে জানা যায়, বিদ্যালয়ের ছাত্রীসংখ্যা ১৮৫৯ সন হইতেই ক্রমশঃ বাড়িয়া চলে। ছাত্রীসংখ্যা তখন ছিল ৯৩ জন। যানবাহনের অভাবহেতু তাঁহারা অনেক ছাত্রীকে ভর্তি করিতে পারেন নাই, নচেৎ এই সংখ্যা একশত ছাড়াইয়া যাইত। ছাত্রীদের মাতৃভাষার মাধ্যমে অবৈতনে পাটীগণিত, ভূগোল, জীবনী, বাংলার ইতিহাস প্রভৃতি শিক্ষা দেওয়া হইতেছিল। সীবন ও বৃন্দনও তাহারা রীতিমত শিক্ষা করিত। তখন বিদ্যালয়ে প্রধানা শিক্ষয়িত্রী বাদে অন্য শিক্ষয়িত্রী ছিলেন দুইজন এবং পণ্ডিতও ছিলেন দুইজন। ছাত্রীগণ ছয়টি শ্রেণীতে বিভক্ত ছিল। এগার-বার বৎসর বয়সে বিবাহ হওয়ায় প্রথম শ্রেণীতে খুব কম ছাত্রীই পাওয়া যাইত। বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষা এ কারণ অনেকটা ব্যাহত হইতে থাকে। তবে এই বিদ্যালয়ের আদর্শ দেশোভ্যন্তরে ক্রমশঃ ছড়াইয়া পড়ায় স্ত্রী-শিক্ষা দ্রুত প্রসারলাভ করিতেছিল নিশ্চয়। ইতিমধ্যে কলিকাতার ধনাঢ্য ব্যক্তিদের পরিবারেও স্ত্রী-শিক্ষার বিশেষ প্রচলন হইতেছিল। ১৮৬২-৬৩ সনের শিক্ষাবিষয়ক রিপোর্টে সর্বপ্রথম স্ত্রী-শিক্ষা বিষয়ে উল্লেখ দেখিতে পাই। বিদ্যালয়-সংক্রান্ত কার্য-বিবরণের সংক্ষিপ্তসার ইহাতে দেওয়া হইয়াছিল। এই রিপোর্ট হইতেই বেথুন-প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিদ্যালয়টির নাম কলিকাতা বালিকা বিদ্যালয়ের পরিবর্তে ‘বেথুন স্কুল’ বলিয়া আমরা জানিতে পারিতেছি। ইহার অল্প পূর্বে বিদ্যালয়টির এই নাম দেওয়া হইয়া থাকিবে।

এই সময় কলিকাতায় ও মফস্বলে বালিকা বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা ক্রমশঃ বাড়িতে থাকে। তাহাতে সরকারের বিশেষ অর্থ ব্যয় হইত না। কলিকাতার বেথুন বিদ্যালয় খাস সরকারী অবৈতনিক প্রতিষ্ঠান। এখানকার ছাত্রী-পিছদ সরকারকে কমবেশী বৎসরে দশ টাকা করিয়া খরচ করিতে হয়। অথচ এই স্কুল একটি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়। সরকার ১৮৬৩-৬৪ সনেই ধূয়া তুলিলেন, একটি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের জন্য এত খরচ করা মোটেই সমীচীন নহে—বিশেষ করিয়া যখন দেখা গেল, ৯২জন ছাত্রীর মধ্যে এক-চতুর্থাংশই মাত্র সামান্য লেখাপড়া শেখে, বাকী ছাত্রীরা এখানে একরকম কিছুই শিখিতে পায় না। সম্পাদক বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় সরকারের এবিস্বিধ মনোভাবে বাধা দিতে কখনও স্বিধা করেন নাই। ১৮৬৬ সনের ডিসেম্বর হইতে ছাত্রী পিছদ একটাকা করিয়া বেতন ধার্য করা হইল। এই সময় কলিকাতায় কুমারী মেরী কার্পেন্টার আঁসিয়া যখন প্রস্তাব করিলেন যে, বালিকা বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা যেদূর বাড়িয়া যাইতেছে তাহাতে গবর্নমেন্টের পক্ষ হইতে বেথুন বিদ্যালয়-গৃহে ইহারই সঙ্গে একটি নর্ম্যাল স্কুল বা শিক্ষয়িত্রী বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হউক, তখন সরকার যেন অকূলে কূল পাইলেন। বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয় তথা অধ্যক্ষ-সভা এ প্রস্তাবে এই বলিয়া আপত্তি জানাইলেন যে, শিক্ষয়িত্রী প্রয়োজন যথেষ্ট থাকিলেও তৎকালীন সামাজিক অবস্থায় হিন্দু নারীদের মধ্য হইতে বয়স্কা ছাত্রী পাওয়া সম্ভব হইবে না।

সরকার ইহাতে কর্ণপাত না করিয়া ১৮৬৯ সনের জানুয়ারী হইতে বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ের সঙ্গে একটি নর্মাল স্কুল স্থাপন করিলেন। অধ্যক্ষ-সভা ভাঙ্গিয়া দিয়া উভয় বিদ্যালয় খাস সরকারী তত্ত্বাবধানে আনা হইল। তিন বৎসর পরে কিন্তু বন্ধা গেল, বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের উক্তিই যথার্থ বলিয়া প্রতিপন্ন হইয়াছে। ছাত্রী অভাবে গবর্নমেন্ট ১৮৭২ সনের ৩১শে জানুয়ারী নর্মাল স্কুলটি তুলিয়া দিতে বাধ্য হন। ইহার পর এক বৎসর কাল বেথুন স্কুলটি তাঁহারা নিজ তত্ত্বাবধানে রাখিবার পর ১৮৭৩ সনের মার্চ মাসে একটি বেসরকারী কমিটির উপরে ইহার পরিচালনা-ভার অর্পণ করিয়া খানিকটা স্বস্তির নিঃশ্বাস ফেলিলেন।

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পাঁচজন সদস্য লইয়া কমিটি গঠিত হইল। হাইকোর্টের বিচারপতি জন বাড ফিয়ার—সভাপতি; রাজা কালীকৃষ্ণ বাহাদুর, প্যারীচরণ সরকার, উমেশচন্দ্র বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়—সদস্য; মনোমোহন ঘোষ, ব্যারিস্টার—সম্পাদক। মনোমোহন ঘোষ ১৮৭৩, মার্চ হইতে ১৮৯৬, অক্টোবর মাসে মৃত্যু পর্যন্ত প্রায় চব্বিশ বৎসর একাদিক্রমে বেথুন স্কুলের সম্পাদকের পদে সমাসীন ছিলেন। তাঁহার আমলেই বিদ্যালয়টির নানাবিধ উন্নতির সূত্রপাত হয়। ইহা সাধারণ প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় হইতে এই সময়ের মধ্যে কিরূপে একটি প্রথম শ্রেণীর কলেজে পরিণত হইয়াছিল, সে এক বিচিত্র কাহিনী।

বেথুন স্কুল একটি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় মাত্র ছিল। তথাপি ইহার সংস্কার ও উন্নতি সাধনের জন্য কমিটি প্রথম হইতেই সর্বিশেষ তৎপর হইলেন। ১৮৭৩-৭৪ সনে ছাত্রীদের বেতন ধার্য হয় প্রতি মাসে দুই টাকা করিয়া। এ কারণ ইহার ছাত্রীসংখ্যা কমিয়া ৭২ জনে দাঁড়ায়। কিন্তু এখানকার শিক্ষাদানের উৎকর্ষগুণে এই সংখ্যা শীঘ্রই বাড়িয়া যায়। বাহির হইতে পরীক্ষক আনাইয়া ছাত্রীদের পরীক্ষা লওয়া হইল। এই পরীক্ষক তাহাদের পাঠোৎকর্ষ সম্বন্ধে অনুকূল মত প্রকাশ করিলেন। এই সময় কলিকাতায় ‘হিন্দু মহিলা বিদ্যালয়’ নামে একটি উন্নত ধরনের বোর্ডিং বালিকা বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। ১৮৭৬ সন নাগাদ ইহার নাম বদলাইয়া ‘বঙ্গ মহিলা বিদ্যালয়’ নামে পরিচিত হয়। এখানকার ছাত্রীগণ পাঠে এত উৎকর্ষ লাভ করিতে থাকে যে, অবিলম্বে যে তাহারা প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষা দিতে সমর্থ হইবে এরূপও আভাস পাওয়া গেল। এদিকে এই বিদ্যালয়টির কর্তৃপক্ষের কেহ কেহ বেথুন স্কুলের অধ্যক্ষ-সভারও অন্তর্ভুক্ত ছিলেন। বিশেষতঃ শেষোক্ত বিদ্যালয়ের সম্পাদক মনোমোহন বঙ্গ মহিলা বিদ্যালয়ের একজন পৃষ্ঠপোষক ছিলেন। আবার সরকার শৃঙ্খলমাত্র একটি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের জন্য এত অধিক অর্থ ব্যয় করিতে বহুদিন যাবৎ নারাজ ছিলেন। এ সকল কারণে সরকার ও উভয় বিদ্যালয়ের কর্তৃপক্ষের মধ্যে প্রয়োজনীয় আলাপ-আলোচনাদি চলিবার পর বঙ্গ মহিলা বিদ্যালয় ও বেথুন স্কুল মিলিত হইয়া ১৮৭৮ সনের ১লা আগস্ট হইতে উহা একটি সরকারী উচ্চ-ইংরেজী বিদ্যালয়ে পরিণত হইল। এই বৎসর হইতেই যাহাতে বালিকাগণ প্রবেশিকা ও তদুচ্চ পরীক্ষাসমূহ দিতে পারে তজ্জন্য বিশ্ব-বিদ্যালয়ের নিয়মাদি সংশোধিত করা হয়। এখানে উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, ১৮৭৬ সনে দেৱাদুন হইতে চন্দ্রমুখী বসু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিশেষ অনুমতি লইয়া প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষার মানের উপযোগী একটি পরীক্ষা দেন ও তাহাতে উত্তীর্ণ হন।

তবে ১৮৭৮ সনের প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায়ই অন্য সকল ছাত্রের সঙ্গে সমভাবে যথারীতি

প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষা দিয়া বেথুন স্কুল হইতে কাদম্বিনী বসু প্রথম উত্তীর্ণ হইলেন। মাত্র এক নম্বরের জন্য তিনি প্রথম বিভাগে স্থান লাভ করিতে পারেন নাই। নারীর এই প্রথম প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় কৃতকার্য হওয়ায় সম্বর্ধন ধন্য ধন্য পড়িয়া গেল। কাদম্বিনী ভাওয়ালের রাজার নিকট হইতে বেসরকারীভাবে যেমন পদ্রস্কার লাভ করিলেন, সরকার কর্তৃকও তিনি অনদ্বন্দ্ব পদ্রস্কৃত হইলেন। বঙ্গের ছোটলাট তাঁহার জন্য মাসিক পনের টাকার একটি বৃত্তির ব্যবস্থা করিলেন। তবে ইহার সঙ্গে এই সত্ত্ব জড়িয়া দেওয়া হয় যে, কাদম্বিনীকে এফ্-এ পড়িতে হইবে। কিন্তু তখন তো ইহা পড়িবার কোন সুবিধা ছিল না। কাদম্বিনী এফ্-এ পড়িবার ইচ্ছা প্রকাশ করিলে সরকার অধ্যাপক শশীভূষণ দত্ত, এম-এ'র তত্ত্বাবধানে ১৮৭৯ সন হইতে বেথুন স্কুলে এফ্-এ ক্লাস খুলিয়া দিলেন। চন্দ্রমুখী বসুও এই সুযোগে কলিকাতাস্থ ফ্রি চার্চ নর্ম্যাল স্কুলে এফ্-এ পড়িতে আরম্ভ করেন। উভয়েই এফ-এ পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইলে, ১৮৮১ সন হইতে বেথুন স্কুলে বি-এ ক্লাস খোলা হয় এবং সেখানে তাঁহারা বি-এ পড়িতে সুরু করেন। এইরূপে প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষা দানের তিন বৎসরের মধ্যেই ছাত্রীগণ বি-এ পর্যন্ত অধ্যয়নের সুবিধা প্রাপ্ত হইলেন।

ইতিমধ্যে প্রায় প্রতি বৎসরই ফ্রি চার্চ নর্ম্যাল স্কুল এবং বেথুন স্কুল হইতে ছাত্রীগণ প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় উপস্থিত হইতে লাগিলেন। বেথুন স্কুলে শূদ্ধ হিন্দু ছাত্রীদের পড়ানো হইত। কলেজে কিন্তু হিন্দু-অহিন্দু নির্বিশেষে সকল ধর্ম-সম্প্রদায়ের ছাত্রীগণেরই ভর্তি করার ব্যবস্থা হয়। ১৮৭৯ সনে এলেন ডি' আর, ফ্রি চার্চ নর্ম্যাল স্কুল হইতে প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইয়া বেথুন স্কুলের প্রথম বার্ষিক শ্রেণীতে ভর্তি হইলেন। ১৮৮০ সনে এই স্কুল হইতে কামিনী সেন (পরে, কবি কামিনী রায়) এবং সুবর্ণপ্রভা বসু প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হন। ১৮৮১ সনে এই পরীক্ষায় কৃতকার্য হন অবলা দাস (পরে, লেডী অবলা বসু) এবং কুমুদিনী খাস্তাগির (পরে, কুমুদিনী দাস ও বেথুন কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ)। এলেন ডি' আরও ১৮৮২ সনের জানুয়ারী মাসে এফ্-এ পরীক্ষা পাস করেন। তখনও কলিকাতা মেডিক্যাল কলেজের দ্বার ছাত্রীদের নিকট উন্মুক্ত হয় নাই। এলেন ডি' আর এবং অবলা দাস চিকিৎসাবিদ্যা অধ্যয়নের জন্য ১৮৮২ সনে বাংলা-সরকারের বৃত্তি লইয়া মাদ্রাজস্থ মেডিক্যাল কলেজে ভর্তি হন।

ইহার এক বৎসরের মধ্যেই কিন্তু তাঁহাদের এ বাধাও দূরীভূত হইল। ১৮৮৩ সনে চন্দ্রমুখী বসু ও কাদম্বিনী বসু বেথুন স্কুলের কলেজ বিভাগ হইতে বি-এ পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইলেন। চন্দ্রমুখী এম-এ পরীক্ষার জন্য প্রস্তুত হইতে থাকেন। কাদম্বিনী ইতিমধ্যে ১২ই জুন ১৮৮৩ তারিখে “অবলা বান্ধব” স্মারকানাথ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের সহিত পরিণীতা হইয়া কাদম্বিনী গাঙ্গুলী নামে পরিচিত হইয়াছেন। এবারে স্বয়ং ছোটলাট স্যার রিভার্স অগষ্টাস টমসন মেডিক্যাল কলেজের অধ্যাপক-সভার বাধাবিপত্তির দিকে দ্রুত্বেশ না করিয়া আদেশ দেন যে, যথাযোগ্য শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত মহিলাদেরও মেডিক্যাল কলেজে ভর্তি করিতে হইবে। এই নির্দেশবলে কাদম্বিনী গাঙ্গুলী চিকিৎসাবিদ্যা অধ্যয়নার্থ এখানে এই বৎসরেই প্রবেশ করেন। ইহার পরে বেথুন স্কুলের কলেজ বিভাগ হইতে একাধিক ছাত্রী ক্রমশঃ মেডিক্যাল কলেজে ভর্তি হইতে লাগিলেন। প্রথম ভারতীয় মহিলা-চিকিৎসকের সম্মান কাদম্বিনীরই প্রাপ্য। প্রবেশিকা, এফ্-এ, বি-এ, এম-এ পরীক্ষায়ও ছাত্রীগণ উত্তীর্ণ হইতে থাকেন। চন্দ্রমুখী বসু ১৮৮৪ সনে এম-এ পরীক্ষায় সাফল্য লাভ করিয়া কলেজ বিভাগে অধ্যাপিকা পদে বৃত্ত হন। তিনি ১৮৮৬ সন হইতে কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ হইলেন। ১৮৮৬ সনে সরলাবালা ঘোষাল (পরবর্তীকালের বিখ্যাত সরলাদেবী চৌধুরাণী) প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইয়া

এখানকার কলেজ বিভাগে অধ্যয়ন করিতে আরম্ভ করেন। কামিনী সেনও এই বৎসর বি-এ পাস করিয়া স্কুল বিভাগে দ্বিতীয় শিক্ষয়িত্রী পদে নিযুক্ত হন।

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এইরূপে বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ের স্কুল ও কলেজ বিভাগ উভয়েরই ছাত্রীগণের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পরীক্ষায় সাফল্য হেতু ইহার খ্যাতি বাড়িতে থাকে। এই দুই বিভাগের ছাত্রীসংখ্যা উত্তরোত্তর বাড়িয়া চলিল। কলেজ বিভাগ ১৮৭৯ সনেই খোলা হইয়াছিল বটে, কিন্তু ইহাকে এতদিন একটি স্বতন্ত্র কলেজের মর্যাদা দেওয়া হয় নাই। এফ্-এ, বি-এ, ও এম-এ পরীক্ষার জন্য বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ইহাকে বিশেষ অনুমতি প্রদান করিতেন। কলেজ বিভাগের ছাত্রীসংখ্যা বাড়িয়া যাওয়ায় ১৮৮৮ সন হইতে এই বিভাগকে সম্পূর্ণ স্বতন্ত্র একটি কলেজে পরিণত করা হইল, নাম হইল বেথুন কলেজ। স্কুলটি বেথুন কলেজিয়েট স্কুল বলিয়া অভিহিত হইতে থাকে। স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীগণ অনেকেই পরীক্ষায় কৃতিত্ব প্রদর্শন করিয়া সরকারী বৃত্তি লাভ করিয়াছিলেন। ডক্টর রাসবিহারী ঘোষ-প্রদত্ত পদ্মাবতী সুবর্ণ পদক বেথুন কলেজ হইতে বি-এ পরীক্ষোত্তীর্ণা ছাত্রী সরলাবালা ঘোষাল ১৮৯০ সনে সর্বপ্রথম লাভ করেন। কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ চন্দ্রমুখী বসু এবং স্কুলের প্রধান শিক্ষয়িত্রী কুমারী রাধারাণী লাহড়ী ও অন্যান্য শিক্ষক-শিক্ষয়িত্রীগণের শিক্ষাগুণে ছাত্রীদের এই প্রকার পাঠোৎকর্ষ সম্ভব হইয়াছিল।

বিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যক্ষ-সভাও নানা দিক দিয়া ইহার উভয় বিভাগের উন্নতির প্রতি বিশেষ অবহিত ছিলেন। ১৮৮৮-৮৯ সন হইতে স্কুল বিভাগে অঙ্কন ও সংগীত শিক্ষা প্রবর্তিত হইল। কলেজের ছাত্রীগণকেও ছাত্রীনিবাসে স্থান দেওয়া হইত। কিন্তু স্কুল-গৃহে স্থান অসম্পূর্ণ হওয়ায় সম্পাদক মনোমোহনের চেষ্টা-যত্নে বিদ্যালয়ের হাতার মধ্যে একটি স্বতন্ত্র ছাত্রীনিবাস ১৮৯১ সনে নিৰ্ম্মিত হয়। ১৮৯০-৯১ সনে কামিনী সেন অধ্যাপিকা পদে উন্নীত হন, তাহার স্থলে কুমুদিনী খাস্তাগির স্কুলের দ্বিতীয় শিক্ষয়িত্রীপদে নিযুক্ত হইলেন। বেথুন স্কুলের ভূতপূৰ্ব সম্পাদক নারীহিতৈষী বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের মৃত্যু (২৯শে জুলাই ১৮৯১) হইলে বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষয়িত্রী ও অধ্যাপিকাগণ এবং কলিকাতার গণ্যমান্য মহিলারা মিলিত হইয়া তাহার স্থায়ী স্মৃতির উদ্দেশ্যে একটি ভান্ডার স্থাপন করেন। এই উদ্দেশ্যে প্রাপ্ত চাঁদা হইতে স্কুলের উৎকৃষ্ট ছাত্রীগণকে প্রতি বৎসর একটি বৃত্তি দেওয়ার ব্যবস্থা হইয়াছিল (১৮৯৬)। এখনও কিঞ্চিৎ বদল করিয়া এই বৃত্তি দেওয়া হইয়া থাকে। বিদ্যালয়ের—স্কুল ও কলেজের যখন এইরূপ উন্নতি হইতেছিল তখন, ১৮৯৬ সনের ১৭ই অক্টোবর ইহার সম্পাদক মনোমোহন ঘোষ মারা গেলেন। তাহার স্মৃতিস্মারকও এদেশে ও বিদেশে নানারূপ চেষ্টা হয়। বিদেশী বন্ধুগণের দ্বারা এক প্রস্তাব বই আলমারী-সমেত মনোমোহনের নামে কলেজকে উপহার দেওয়া হইল। ইহার নামকরণ হয়—‘Monomohun Ghose Memorial Library.’

মনোমোহনের পরে বিখ্যাত কংগ্রেসকক্ষ্মী জনকীনাত ঘোষাল বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যক্ষ-সভার সেক্রেটারী বা সম্পাদক হন এবং ১৯০৩ সনের ডিসেম্বর পর্যন্ত এই পদে অধিষ্ঠিত থাকেন। এই সময়ের মধ্যে বেথুন স্কুল এবং কলেজ উভয়েরই পাঠোন্নতি অব্যাহত ছিল। ১৯০১ সনে চন্দ্রমুখী বসু অধ্যক্ষ পদ হইতে অবসর গ্রহণ করেন। তাহার পদে নিযুক্ত হন

কুমুদিনী দাস (ইহার পুত্রস্বৈ তিনি বিবাহিত হইয়া ‘খাস্তীগর’-এর বদলে ‘দাস’ হইয়াছিলেন।) এই সময়কার ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে কুমুদিনী মিত্র ১৯০২-৩ সনে বি-এ পাশ করেন। বাংলার নারীসমাজের উন্নতিকল্পে সাংবাদিক, সাহিত্যিক, এবং সামাজিক ও রাষ্ট্রীয় কর্মে বিশেষভাবে তিনি নিজেকে লিপ্ত করিয়াছিলেন। জানকীনাথের পরে ১৯০৩ সনের শেষে হাইকোর্টের বিচারপতি সারদাচরণ মিত্র বিদ্যালয়ের সম্পাদক পদ গ্রহণ করেন। তাঁহার সময়েও বিদ্যালয়ের যথেষ্ট উন্নতি সাধিত হয়। জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় বেথুন কলেজ হইতে এফ-এ ও বি-এ পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হন। তিনিও আমাদের জাতীয় আন্দোলনে একান্তভাবে যোগদান করিয়াছিলেন। ১৯০৪ সনের নূতন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় আইন অনুসারে বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ের কর্তৃত্ব সম্পর্কে ১৯০৮ সনের নবেম্বর হইতে যথেষ্ট অদল-বদল হয়। কলেজের জন্য একটি নূতন গবর্নিং বডি বা অধ্যক্ষ-সভা এবং স্কুলের জন্য স্বতন্ত্র ম্যানেজিং কমিটি বা পরিচালক-সভা গঠিত হইল। ১৯০৯ সনের প্রারম্ভ হইতেই স্বতন্ত্রভাবে এই পরিচালনা-কার্য চলিতে থাকে। কলেজের সম্পাদক পদে বৃত্ত হন অধ্যক্ষ মহোদয়া এবং স্কুলের সম্পাদক হন প্রধানা শিক্ষয়িত্রী। অধ্যক্ষ-সভার সভাপতি হন শিক্ষা-বিভাগের অধিকর্তা (D. P. I.) এবং পরিচালক-সভার সভাপতি স্থির হন কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ। এইরূপে নূতন আইনে বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজ উভয়েরই নূতন যুগের সূচনা হইল। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিভিন্ন পরীক্ষায়ই বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীদের সাফল্য সকলের তাক লাগাইয়া দিল। কৃতী মহিলা গ্রাজুয়েটদের প্রাপ্ত পদ্মাবতী সূবর্ণ পদক আঠার বৎসরের মধ্যে দশ বৎসরই এ কলেজ হইতে উত্তীর্ণা গ্রাজুয়েট ছাত্রীরা প্রাপ্ত হইয়াছিলেন।

এই সময়কার আর একটি লক্ষণীয় বিষয়—রক্ষণশীল হিন্দু পরিবারের কন্যারাও উভয় বিভাগে ছাত্রীরূপে প্রবিষ্ট হন। একজনের নাম এখানে বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। সদ্য পরলোকগতা সরলাবালা মিত্র ছিলেন বালবিধবা, তিনি বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষালাভ করিয়া বি-এ পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হন এবং স্কুলে শিক্ষয়িত্রীর পদ গ্রহণ করেন (১৯০১)। ১৯০৬* সনের অক্টোবর মাসে শিক্ষয়িত্রীবিদ্যা অধ্যয়নার্থ ভারত গবর্নমেন্টের বৃত্তি লইয়া তিনি বিলাত যান। সেখান হইতে এই বিদ্যা আয়ত্ত করিয়া দুই বৎসর পরে ১৯০৮ সনের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে কলিকাতায় প্রত্যাবৃত্ত হন। পরবর্তী অক্টোবরে নবপ্রতিষ্ঠিত সরকারী শিক্ষয়িত্রী-বিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যক্ষ পদে তিনি নিযুক্ত হইয়াছিলেন।

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বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নূতন নিয়ম অনুযায়ী বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজ উভয়েরই কাজ সূচ্যুভাবে চলিতে লাগিল। তবে ছাত্রীসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অত্যন্ত স্থানাভাব ঘটে। বিদ্যালয়-সংলগ্ন খানিকটা জমি পাওয়া গেলেও গৃহনির্মাণের কোনও আয়োজন হইল না। ১৯১৫ সনে বিদ্যালয়ের পশ্চিম দিক জুড়িয়া যে শিমলা বাজার ছিল তাহা তুলিয়া দিয়া সরকার সে জমি বিদ্যালয়ের জন্য সংগ্রহ করিয়া দিলেন, কিন্তু ইহার পরও নূতন গৃহনির্মাণের কোন লক্ষণ দেখা গেল না। এদিকে ১৯১০ সন হইতে পরীক্ষায় ছাত্রীরা পুত্রের মতই কৃতিত্ব প্রদর্শন করিতে থাকে। সুসাহিত্যিক শান্তা চট্টোপাধ্যায় (পরে, নাগ) ১৯১০ সনে প্রথম

* ইংরেজী ইতিহাস অংশে (পৃ. ৬১, উপর হইতে ২১শ পৃষ্ঠা) এই সনটি ভ্রমক্রমে ‘১৯০৭’ মনে হইয়াছে। এ সময়ে তিনি স্কুলের দ্বিতীয় শিক্ষয়িত্রী।

বিভাগে প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইয়া বৃত্তি লাভ করেন। ইহার দুই বৎসর পরে বেথুন স্কুল হইতে তিটিনী গদ্যুত (পরে, দাস) বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় ছাত্র-ছাত্রী উভয়ের মধ্যে প্রথম স্থান অধিকার করিলেন। এইবারে প্রসিদ্ধা লেখিকা সীতা চট্টোপাধ্যায় (পরে, চৌধুরী) ও সৃজাতা বসু (পরে, রায়) বিশেষ কৃতিত্বের সহিত এই পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হইলেন। তাঁহাদের সাহিত্য-প্রীতিও ছিল যথেষ্ট। ১৯১৩ সনে কলেজে অধ্যয়ন আরম্ভ করিয়া এই তিনজন ছাত্রী মিলিয়া 'উষা' নামে একখানি হস্তলিখিত পত্রিকা বাহির করেন। পরবর্ত্তী কালের বেথুন কলেজ ম্যাগাজিনের ইহাই সূচনা। কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ কুমুদিনী দাস দীর্ঘকাল শিক্ষায়ত্নী, অধ্যাপিকা ও অধ্যক্ষরূপে বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের সেবা করিয়া ১৯১৩ সনে এখানকার কর্ম্ম ত্যাগ করেন। তৎস্থলে প্রথমে সাময়িক ও পরে স্থায়ীভাবে অধ্যক্ষ হইলেন সুরবালা ঘোষ। তিনি ১৯১৬ সন পর্য্যন্ত এই পদে অধিষ্ঠিত ছিলেন।

এই বৎসর নবেম্বর মাসে কুমারী এ. এল. জেনো নাম্নী এক ইংরেজ মহিলা আই-ই-এস্ শ্রেণীভুক্ত হইয়া অতিরিক্ত বেতনে কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ হইয়া আসেন। তাঁহার আগমনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে কোন কোন দিকে কলেজের বিশেষ উন্নতি সূচিত হয়। এখানে কোন বিষয়ে অনার্স পড়ার ব্যবস্থা ছিল না। যদি কেহ অনার্স পরীক্ষা দিতে চাহিত, তবে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিশেষ অনুমতি লইয়া নন্-কলেজিয়েট ছাত্রী হিসাবে তাঁহাকে এই পরীক্ষা দিতে হইত। ১৯১৬ সনে তিটিনী গদ্যুত সংস্কৃত এবং সীতা চট্টোপাধ্যায় ও সৃজাতা বসু ইংরেজীতে নন্-কলেজিয়েট ছাত্রীরূপে পরীক্ষা দিয়া বিশেষ কৃতিত্ব দেখান। তিটিনী সংস্কৃত প্রথম শ্রেণী-ভুক্ত হইলেন। তখন আর কলেজকে ঠেকাইয়া রাখা গেল না। জেনোর চেষ্টায় পর বৎসর হইতেই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অনুমোদনক্রমে এই দুই বিষয়ে অনার্স পরীক্ষার ব্যবস্থা হইল। কলেজে মহিলা অধ্যাপিকা সংখ্যা যাহাতে বৃদ্ধিপ্রাপ্ত হয় সেদিকে জেনো সচেতন হইলেন। ১৯১৭ সন হইতে স্কুলের ছাত্রী-বেতন প্রতি মাসে দুই টাকা এবং কলেজে তিন টাকা ধার্য্য হয়। বেথুন বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠায় বেথুনের সহকর্ম্মী দক্ষিণারঞ্জন মুখোপাধ্যায়ের স্মৃতি-ফলক ১৯১৬ সনে কর্তৃপক্ষ বিদ্যালয়-ভবনে স্থাপন করেন। ১৯১৮ সন হইতে 'উষা' পত্রিকা মনুদ্রাঙ্কিত হইয়া বাহির হইতে আরম্ভ হইল।

১৯১৮ সনের শেষে কুমারী জি. এম্. রাইট বেথুন কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ হইয়া আসেন। তিনি এই পদে প্রায় দশ বৎসর কাল নিযুক্ত থাকিয়া ১৯২৮ সনের মাঝামাঝি পদত্যাগ করিয়া চলিয়া যান। এই সময়ের মধ্যে ভারতবর্ষে রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলন প্রসার লাভ করে এবং ছাত্র-ছাত্রীরা তাহাতে যোগ দিতে পশ্চাৎপদ হয় নাই। কিন্তু অধ্যক্ষ রাইট তাহাতে সায় দিতে পারেন নাই। তিনি ভারতীয় স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল ছিলেন না।-সর্ব্বোপরি রাজনৈতিক আবর্ত্তে পড়িয়া ছাত্রীগণ শিক্ষার প্রতি ঔদাসীন্য প্রকাশ করে ইহাও তিনি সহ্য করিতে পারিতেন না। তিনি নিয়ম-শৃঙ্খলার ঘোর পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন। তাঁহার সময়ে বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীগণ পাঠোৎকর্ষের জন্য যে বিশেষ খ্যাতিলাভ করে ইহা তাহার মূলীভূত কারণ সন্দেহ নাই। রাইট মহোদয় কলেজের কার্য্য সুষ্ঠুরূপে সম্পন্ন করিবার উদ্দেশ্যে বিদ্যালয়-ভবনটি পুরাপুরি ইহার জন্য রাখিয়া দিলেন। বিদ্যালয়-সংলগ্ন জমির উপর কতকগুলি অস্থায়ী টিনের চালাঘর নির্মাণ করাইয়া সেখানে স্কুলটি স্থানান্তরিত করান। কলেজের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীদের সঙ্গে যোগসাধন নিমিত্ত ১৯২১ সনের ৩রা সেপ্টেম্বর একটি প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীসভা গঠিত হয়। বলা বাহুল্য, রাইট মহোদয় ইহার বিশেষ উৎসাহদাতা ছিলেন। ১৯২৬ সনে তাঁহারই আগ্রহাতিশয়ে 'বেথুন কলেজ ম্যাগাজিন' এই

নূতন নামে ছাত্রীদের পত্রিকা বাহির হয়। এই সময়ে ছাত্রীদের একটি বিতর্ক সভাও গঠিত হইল।

কলেজের শিক্ষাও বিশেষ প্রসারলাভ করিল। রাইট ১৯২৩-২৪ সন হইতে আই-এস্‌সি-শ্রেণী খুলিয়া দেন। দর্শন ও অঙ্কশাস্ত্রেও অনার্স-ক্লাস ১৯২৩ হইতে খোলা হইল। দর্শন ও সংস্কৃতের অধ্যাপক ছিলেন যথাক্রমে বিখ্যাত দার্শনিক কৃষ্ণচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য (১৯১৪-২৮) ও দেবেন্দ্রনাথ রায় (১৯১২-৩৮)। তাঁহাদের অধ্যাপনা গুণে ছাত্রীগণ সংস্কৃত ও দর্শন-শাস্ত্রের অনার্স পরীক্ষায় উচ্চতম স্থান অধিকার করিয়াছিলেন। বাহির হইতে শিক্ষা-বিদদের আনাইয়া বিভিন্ন বিষয়ের বক্তৃতা দেওয়ানো হইত। বেঙ্গল উইমেনস্‌ এডুকেশন লীগ এবং বেঙ্গল সোশ্যাল সাভিস লীগ দ্বারা মধ্যে মধ্যে ছাত্রীদের স্বাস্থ্যবিজ্ঞান, সেবা-পরায়ণতা প্রভৃতি সম্বন্ধে বক্তৃতা দানেরও ব্যবস্থা করা হইয়াছিল। শরীর-চর্চারও কতকটা আয়োজন হয় এই সময়ে। স্কুলের প্রধানা শিক্ষয়িত্রী ছিলেন হিরন্ময়ী সেন (১৯১৭-৩৮)। স্কুলটির উন্নতির দিকে তিনি বরাবর সজাগ ছিলেন। তাঁহার সময়ে বহু ছাত্রী প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় বৃত্তিলাভ করিয়াছিলেন। স্কুল ও কলেজের এতাদৃশ উন্নতির মধ্যে রাজনৈতিক কারণে অধ্যক্ষ রাইটকে ১৯২৮ সনের মার্চ মাসে হঠাৎ বেথুন কলেজ ত্যাগ করিয়া চলিয়া যাঁতে হয়। প্রবীণ অধ্যাপক দার্শনিক কৃষ্ণচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য রাইটের ভারত ত্যাগের পর মাত্র দুই মাসের জন্য অধ্যাক্ষের কার্য করেন। পরবর্ত্তী জুন মাসে ঢাকা ইডেন ফিমেল স্কুলের অধ্যক্ষ রাজকুমারী দাস বেথুন কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ হইয়া আসিলেন। রাজকুমারী বেথুন কলেজের প্রথম ভারতীয় অধ্যক্ষ চন্দ্রমুখী বসুর সহোদরা এবং এই কলেজেরই একজন খ্যাতনামা প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী।

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রাজকুমারী দাসের অধ্যক্ষতা-কালেও (১৯২৮-৩৩) ভারতবর্ষে নানারূপ রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলন দেখা দেয়। বেথুন কলেজের ছাত্রীরা ইহার প্রভাব এড়াইতে পারে নাই। ১৯৩০ সনে এবং ১৯৩২ সনে দুইবার হরতাল করায় শৃঙ্খলাভঙ্গের দায়ে তাহাদিগকে নানারূপ ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হইতে হয়। শেষোক্ত বারে কলেজের ছাত্রীসংখ্যা এত কমিয়া গিয়াছিল যে, এক-একটি শ্রেণীতে পাঁচ-ছয় জনের বেশী ছাত্রী ছিল না। এই সময়ে বেথুন কলেজের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীরা কেহ কেহ বৈশ্লবিক কস্মেও লিপ্ত হইয়া পড়িয়াছিলেন। এ কারণ বোধ হয় নিয়ম-শৃঙ্খলা প্রতিষ্ঠাকল্পে অধ্যক্ষ মহোদয়াকে কঠোরতর পন্থা অবলম্বন করিতে হইয়াছিল। তবে এত বিপদ-আপদ ও বিশৃঙ্খলার মধ্যেও ছাত্রীদের পাঠোৎকর্ষে বিশেষ ক্ষতি হয় নাই। তাঁহারা সরকারী বৃত্তি ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পদকাদি পাইতে লাগিলেন। রাজকুমারীর সময়ে আর একটি বিষয়েও আন্দোলন সূর্য হয়। বেথুন স্কুল-ভবন বেথুনের উইল অনুযায়ী স্কুলেরই প্রাপ্য, কলেজের নহে। আবার হিন্দু ছাত্রীই শুদ্ধ এখানে পড়িতে পারিবে। কাজেই পুরাতন স্কুল-গৃহটি কলেজ কর্তৃক ব্যবহার সাধারণের নিকট বেআইনী বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইতে লাগিল। এমনকি বিদ্যালয়ের হাতার মধ্যে যে ছাত্রীনিবাস ছিল তাহাতেও অহিন্দু-ছাত্রী গ্রহণ যুক্তিযুক্ত হয় নাই। এ দুইটি বিষয় সংশোধনের জন্য অনন্তর কর্তৃপক্ষ বিশেষ অবহিত হন। এখানে উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, ছাত্রীসংখ্যা বর্ধিত হওয়ার উপযুক্ত তত্ত্বাবধানে কলেজের বাহিরেও কিছু পদার্থ হইতে ছাত্রীনিবাস খোলা হইয়াছিল।

রাজকুমারী দাস অবসর গ্রহণ করিলে তাঁহার স্থলে অধ্যক্ষ হন বেথুন বিদ্যালয়ের বিখ্যাত প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী তিটনী দাস। তিনি ১৯৩২ সনে দর্শনশাস্ত্রের অধ্যাপিকা হইয়া আসেন। বিদ্যালয়ের শতবার্ষিকী উৎসব কালেও তিনি অধ্যক্ষ পদে অধিষ্ঠিত ছিলেন। তাঁহার অধ্যক্ষতাকালকে দুই ভাগে ভাগ করা যায়—(১) ১৯৩৪-৪১ এবং (২) ১৯৪২-৪৯। প্রথমোক্ত অংশে তাঁহার কর্মদক্ষতায় নানা দিকেই কলেজের উন্নতি হইয়াছিল। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পরীক্ষাসমূহে কৃতিত্ব প্রদর্শন, কলেজের নূতন আবাসস্থল লাভ (১৯৪০), প্রধানতঃ কলেজের ছাত্রীদের জন্য কলেজ-সমিহিত ভূমির উপর সরকারী অর্ধে ছাত্রীনিবাস নিৰ্ম্মাণ (১৯৩৬), স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে সম্বন্ধভাবে কার্য করার প্রয়াস, নানারূপ খেলাধুলার ব্যবস্থা প্রভৃতিও এই সময়ের বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য বিষয়। ১৯৩২ সনে ছাত্রীদের কলেজ ইউনিয়ন গঠিত হয় বটে, কিন্তু ১৯৩৪ সনেই ইহার নিয়মাবলী রচিত হইয়া বিতর্কসভা, বহিঃসংগঠন, খেলাধুলা ও পত্রিকা পরিচালন এই চারিটি বিভাগে ইহার কার্য সূচ্যরূপে আরম্ভ হয়। প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীদের সভার নিয়মাবলীও এই সনে স্থিরীকৃত হইল। প্রাক্তন ও ঐ সময়ের ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে সংযোগ স্থাপনের জন্য অধ্যক্ষ মহোদয়ার উদ্যোগে ক্রীড়া-প্রতিযোগিতা ও অভিনয়াদিরও ব্যবস্থা করা হয়। প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীসভার বাৎসরিক অধিবেশনেই এইরূপ আয়োজন হইত।

ছাত্রী ইউনিয়ন বা সভার কার্যাবলী বেথুন কলেজের মূখ্যপত্র ‘বেথুন কলেজ ম্যাগাজিনে’ নিয়মিত ও বিশদভাবে প্রকাশিত হইতেছিল। কলেজের অন্যতম অধ্যাপক সুপণ্ডিত চিন্তাহরণ চক্রবর্তীর সম্পাদনায় পত্রিকাখানি বিশেষ উন্নতিলাভ করে। স্কুলের প্রধান শিক্ষয়িত্রী হিরন্ময়ী সেনের উদ্যোগে বেথুন স্কুল হইতেও অনুরূপ একখানি ম্যাগাজিন বা পত্রিকা এই সময় বাহির হইল। স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে সহযোগিতা বৃদ্ধির জন্য ক্রীড়া-প্রতিযোগিতার ব্যবস্থা হয়। এই সময়ে স্কুলের বহু ছাত্রী প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষায় কৃতিত্ব প্রদর্শন করিয়া সরকারী সাধারণ ও বিশেষ বৃত্তি লাভ করে। বিদ্যালয়ের বাহিরে শিল্প প্রদর্শনীতে স্কুলের ছাত্রীরা এবং বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক অনুরূপ ‘বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-প্রতিষ্ঠা দিবসে’ কলেজের ছাত্রীরা কুচকাওয়াজেও (‘March Past’) বিশেষ কৃতিত্ব দেখায়। নূতন কলেজ-গৃহের জন্য পার্শ্ববর্তী ক্রাইস্ট চার্চ স্কুল বিল্ডিং ১৯৩০ সনেই সরকার ক্রয় করেন। কিন্তু ইহাকে কলেজের উপযোগী করিয়া সংস্কার করিয়া লইতে প্রায় দশ বৎসর কাটিয়া যায়। যাহা হউক, গৃহের সংস্কারকার্য সমাধা হইলে ১৯৪০ সনের জুলাই মাসে কলেজ নূতন নিজস্ব আবাসে চলিয়া আসে। স্কুলটিও দীর্ঘকাল পরে এই বৎসরের মে মাসে নিজ ভবনে ফিরিয়া গেল।

কলেজের ছাত্রী সংখ্যা এই সময় হইতে আশাতীতরূপে বাড়িয়া গিয়াছিল। কলেজের গ্রন্থাগার, কমনরুম, লেবরেটরী বা বিজ্ঞানাগার প্রসারিত কক্ষে স্থান পাইয়া হাঁফ ছাড়িয়া বাঁচিল। স্কুলটিও নিজ বাসভবনে ফিরিয়া আসিয়া স্বস্তির নিঃশ্বাস ফেলিল। কিন্তু ইতিমধ্যে প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষার বাহন বাংলা ধার্য হইয়াছে, পাঠ্যতালিকাও পরিবর্তিত হইয়াছে। এই নূতন অবস্থায় আদি স্কুল-ভবনটিও প্রয়োজনসিদ্ধির পক্ষে যথেষ্ট নয় বলিয়া প্রতিপন্ন হইল। এখানে উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, নূতন পাঠ্য-তালিকায় নারীজাতির উপযোগী বিভিন্ন বিষয়—যেমন রন্ধন, শিল্পকার্য, সংগীতবিদ্যা প্রভৃতি শিক্ষাদানেরও ব্যবস্থা হয়। অক্ষশাস্ত্রের তিনটি অংশের মধ্যে গণিত রাখিয়া বীজগণিত ও জ্যামিতির বদলে গাণিত্যবিজ্ঞান পাঠ্য-তালিকাভুক্ত করা হইল। সবগুণি একই সঙ্গে আরম্ভ না হইলেও বেথুন স্কুলে কোন-কোনটির শিক্ষাদান এই সময়ে সূচ্য হয়।

প্রায় দুই বৎসর পূর্বে (৩রা সেপ্টেম্বর ১৯৩৯) সূচনা হইলেও ১৯৪১-সনের শেষ হইতেই প্রাচ্যে মিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ প্রবল হইয়া উঠে। জাপানের অগ্রগতির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সরকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহ সরকার নিজেদের প্রয়োজনে লাগাইতে থাকেন। ১৯৪২ সনের প্রথমেই কলেজ ও স্কুলগৃহ হাতা সমেত যুদ্ধকার্যের জন্য তাঁহারা গ্রহণ করিলেন। বেথুন কলেজ বিদ্যাসাগর বাণীভবনে স্থানান্তরিত হইল। স্কুলটি এপ্রিল ১৯৪২ হইতে এপ্রিল ১৯৪৩ পর্যন্ত এক বৎসর বন্ধ ছিল, যদিও শিক্ষক-শিক্ষার্থীগণকে কাজে বহাল রাখা হইয়াছিল। কলেজের কার্য স্বভাবতঃই সঙ্কুচিত হইল। স্কুল-কলেজের যে-সব অনুষ্টান এতাবৎকাল পালিত হইয়া আসিতোছিল তাহাও প্রায় বন্ধ হইয়া গেল। যুদ্ধ শেষ হইলে ১৯৪৬ সনের জানুয়ারী মাসে স্কুল ও কলেজ পুনরায় নিজ নিজ ভবনে ফিরিয়া আসে। কিন্তু এই সময়ে বৎসরাধিককাল সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষে, বিশেষ করিয়া বাংলাদেশে ও কলিকাতায় গোলমাল লাগিয়াই ছিল। সাম্প্রদায়িক হাঙ্গামা, নৌ-ধর্মঘট, আজাদ-হিন্দ ফৌজের মামলা প্রভৃতির দরুন বার বার হরতাল, শোভাযাত্রা ও সভা-সমিতির অনুষ্টান হয়। এ হেতু স্কুল ও কলেজের কার্য বিষম ব্যাঘাত ঘটে। তবে ১৯৪৭ সনের প্রথম হইতেই নূতন আশার আলো দেখা দিল। দীর্ঘকালব্যাপী আলাপ-আলোচনার পর ব্রিটিশরাজ ১৯৪৭ সনের ১৫ই আগস্ট ভারতবর্ষকে ভারতরাষ্ট্র ও পাকিস্থান এই দুই স্বতন্ত্র রাষ্ট্রে বিভক্ত করিয়া উভয়ের নেতৃবর্গের হস্তে শাসনভার অর্পণ করতঃ এখান হইতে বিদায় গ্রহণ করেন। ইহার পর হইতে বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের কার্য নবোদ্যমে সুরু হইয়াছে। ১৯৪৯ সনের শতবার্ষিকী উৎসবও স্কুল ও কলেজ সাগ্রহে উদ্‌যাপিত করিয়াছেন।



বেথুন স্কুল ও কলেজের শতবার্ষিকী উৎসব

শ্রীভারতী রায়

বেথুন কলেজের জনৈকা ছাত্রী

বেথুন কলেজ—উনিশশ উনপঞ্চাশের সাতই মে।— শতবার্ষিকী-উৎসবের প্রথম দিন।
স্মৃতি আজও প্রথম অনুভূতির মতই ঝক্‌ঝক্‌ করছে।

প্রবেশম্ভার উত্তীর্ণ হয়েই দেখা যায় পিচঢালা অন্ধকার পথ দেওদার-বীথির মধ্য দিয়ে
গিয়ে অশ্বথের ছায়ায় এসে মিশেছে। ঐ অশ্বথের ছায়ায় এসে ঘুমিয়ে পড়েছে শতবর্ষের
শত সংঘাতের কাহিনী, বর্ষে বর্ষে উৎসুক বিদ্যার্থিনীদের স্বাগতম্ জানিয়েছে শাখায় শাখায়
ঝলমলিয়ে ওঠা উষালোকমধুপানরাক্তিম নূতন কচি পাতা।

গাছ-স্থ্য-পরিচর্যারতা রমণীর বিদ্যানুশীলন-স্পৃহা সেই বৈদিক যুগ থেকে আরম্ভ
ক'রে আজকের এই নারীস্বাভিন্যাসিত যুগ পর্যন্ত কখনো উজ্জ্বল হয়েছে বৈদিক দেবীসূক্তে,
কখনো ঝিমিয়ে পড়েছে মনুস্মৃতিতে। উনিবিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভে নারীর বিদ্যাশ্রীকে যাঁরা
রমণীর কল্যাণশ্রী থেকে বিন্দুমাত্র কম আকাঙ্ক্ষণীয় বলে মনে করেননি তাঁদের মধ্যে বিদ্যা-
সাগর মহাশয় অবিস্মরণীয়। “কন্যাপোষং পালনীয় শিক্ষণীয়াতিবহুতঃ”—মহানির্ব্বাণতন্ত্রের
এই মন্ত্র সেকালে নূতন শক্তি লাভ করেছিল। আঠারশ উনপঞ্চাশের সাতই মে রাজা দক্ষিণা-
রঞ্জন মদুখোপাধ্যায়ের আবাসে এবং আঠারশ পঞ্চাশের ছয়ই মে কর্ণওয়ালিশ স্ট্রিটে বেথুন
বিদ্যালয়ের গৃহ-প্রতিষ্ঠায় নারীর বিদ্যাশিক্ষার স্ভার উন্মুক্ত হয়। এই দিন দুটোর পূর্ণা-
স্মৃতিকে অবলম্বন ক'রে উনিশশ উনপঞ্চাশের সাতই মে'র শতবার্ষিকী-উৎসবের প্রথম দিনে
আমরা স্কুল-কলেজের সমস্ত মেয়েই সমবেত হয়েছিলাম।

সূর্যোদয়ের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অনুষ্ঠান আরম্ভ হল। মঙ্গলচারিণীরা অশোক-বকুলের
তিনটি শিশুতরু মঙ্গলঘটে বহন ক'রে নিয়ে এলেন। সেদিনের প্রভাতের উজ্জ্বল রৌদ্রা-
লোক, বিচিহ্নিত মঙ্গলঘট, উৎসাহদীপ্ত উৎসুক মদুখ এবং উৎসবোচিত উজ্জ্বল বেশাবাস—
সমস্তই এক অপূর্ব-শ্রীমণ্ডিত হয়ে উঠেছিল। সেই মদুখের নৃত্যের ছন্দহিল্লোলে
বৃক্ষবন্দনাগীতিকল্লোল মদুখের হ'ল—“মরুবিজয়ের কেতন উড়াও হে”।

সেই নৃত্যছন্দানুসারিণীদের বসনবর্ণ শোণতাম্রাভ, বাহুদুল-প্রকোষ্ঠে যুথীপুপ্পের
অগদকঙ্কণ, কেশ ও গলদেশে বিচিত্র পুষ্পমালা। হঠাৎ চোখে ভেসে এল পুরাতন কালের
বৃক্ষবন্দনাকারিণীদের স্বপ্নচ্ছবি—বর্ষার স্নিগ্ধনীল ছায়াতলে পূর্বপবনহিল্লোলে তরুণায়িত
উন্মুক্ত কেশদামে যাদের স্বর্ণবর্ণ নবকর্ণিকার, কর্ণে শিরীষকুণ্ডল, কণ্ঠে বকুলকণ্ঠী, গলদেশে
বর্ষাঋতুর নানাবর্ণ পত্রপুষ্পে গ্রথিত বনমালা আজানুলাম্বিত, প্রকোষ্ঠে কেতকীপত্রিকা,
কটিতে কদম্বকাণ্ডী, নবশ্যামলকান্তি বসনবর্ণ, স্বর্ণাভ স্বচ্ছপীত উত্তরীয়।

স্বপ্ন ভেঙে গেল, শুনলাম ধূলির প্রার্থনা নূতন সুরে—“ধূলিরে ধন্য কর”। তিনটি
বৃক্ষকে ঘিরে অর্ধচন্দ্রাকারে একশটি প্রদীপ জ্বলে উঠল, বেলী-যুথীর মালা আর ধূপ-ধূনোর
সৌরভে বাতাস সুরাভিত হ'য়ে উঠল।

বৈদিক মন্ত্রোচ্চারণের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তিনটি শিশুতরুর রোপণক্রিয়া আরম্ভ হ'ল। মন্ত্রো-
চ্চারণ করলেন শ্রীযুক্ত ক্ষিতিমোহন সেন শাস্ত্রী। রোপণ করলেন—শ্রীযুক্তা দে মহাশয়া,

শ্রীযুক্ত প্রমথনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় এবং শ্রীযুক্তা মনীষা দেবী। একশ শতকের মঙ্গলনির্ঘোষের সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সংগীতহিল্লোল উঠল—“আয় আমাদের অঙ্গনে”।

সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বৃষ্টি, কি বৃষ্টি! কি বৃষ্টি! মেঘে মেঘে আকাশ হঠাৎ অন্ধকার হ'য়ে এলো, ঝম্‌ঝমিয়ে আরম্ভ হ'ল অপ্রত্যাশিত বর্ষণ।

Indian News Review থেকে এই অনুষ্ঠানের চিত্ররূপ তুলে রাখা হয়েছে।



সাতই মে'র অনুষ্ঠানের পর প্রধান শতবার্ষিকী-উৎসবের সূচনা হয় উনিশশ পঞ্চাশের আটাশে জানুয়ারিতে। শীতের পড়ন্ত রোদের সোনালি আলোর অপরাহ্নে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের প্রদেশপাল এই অনুষ্ঠানের উদ্‌বোধন করেন। উদ্‌বোধনী-বিবৃতি জনসাধারণকে শোনার ভার গ্রহণ করেছিলেন কলিকাতা বেতার-কেন্দ্র।

ড্রাম ও বিউগল্ বেজে উঠল,—এই তো এগিয়ে আসছে অনুষ্ঠান প্রাঙ্গণের দিকে একশটি প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীর শোভাযাত্রা। দেখলাম—অশতিবর্ষীয়া বৃন্দার লোলচর্মে তারুণ্যের উচ্ছ্বাস, দীপ্তিহীন চক্ষু আপন শিক্ষানিকেতনের শতবার্ষিকী উদ্‌যাপনের আনন্দের স্ফূর্তি।

শোভাযাত্রার শেষে মাননীয় প্রদেশপাল ও উপস্থিত সভ্যবৃন্দ মহিলাদের শতবার্ষিকী শিল্পকলা প্রদর্শনীর স্বাগতমোচন করলেন। উদ্‌বোধন-বক্তৃতা ও নানান ভাষণের শেষে বেদগান ও মঙ্গলাচরণের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অপরাহ্নের অনুষ্ঠান শেষ হ'ল।

দ্বিতীয় অনুষ্ঠান আরম্ভ হ'ল সেইদিনই সন্ধ্যায়। শতবার্ষিকীর উৎসবসম্বন্ধ—দেওদার-বীথির মাথায় মাথায় নীল-লাল-সবুজ-শাদা আলোকমালায় হীরে-চুনি-পান্না-মোতির সীমন্তিকা। দক্ষিণ বাতাসে শাখায় শাখায় সোহাগ-গুঞ্জন। স্বচ্ছ অন্ধকারের পাতলা ওড়নায় ঢাকা পড়েছে শ্যামল বর্ণসূক্ষ্ম। সার সার দেওদারতরু—যেন সীমন্তিনীরা চলেছে আলোর বরণডালা মাথায় নিয়ে, আরম্ভ করেছে মাগলাসংগীত—শত বার্ষিকী-উৎসবের। তোরণে সানাই-এর রাগমূর্ছনা আর আলোকবন্যাপ্লাবিত বিদ্যাভবনের স্বপ্নময়ী আবেষ্টনী। বিদ্যার্থীন্দ্রদের বিচিহ্নানুষ্ঠানের শেষে সেদিনের উৎসবের সাধ্যাপর্ব সমাপ্ত হ'ল।

উনত্রিশে জানুয়ারির অপরাহ্নে নানা শ্রেণীর প্রাদেশিক নৃত্য ও বিভিন্ন প্রকারের ব্যায়ামকৌড়ায় স্কুল ও কলেজের ছাত্রীরা সমবেত হ'য়ে অংশ গ্রহণ করেছিলেন। সাধ্যানুষ্ঠানে প্রাক্তন ছাত্রীবৃন্দ কর্তৃক পরিচালিত ও অভিনীত রবীন্দ্রনাথের “চিরকুমার সভা” অনাবিল হাস্যরসের উদ্রেক করেছিল।

তিরিশে জানুয়ারি মহাত্মা গান্ধীর মহাপ্রয়াণ-দিবস। রবীন্দ্রসংগীতের মাধ্যমে লোকান্তরিত আত্মার প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি ক'রে পরবর্তী অনুষ্ঠান আরম্ভ হ'ল। এই অনুষ্ঠানের বিষয়বস্তু ছিল “সংস্কৃতির ইতিহাসে ভারতীয় নারী”। বিচিত্র চরিত্রভূমিকা বহুধা বেশভূষা-রূপায়ণ এবং ঐতিহাসিক চরিত্রগুলির প্রত্যক্ষীকরণ—এই অনুষ্ঠানটির আকর্ষণের কারণ ছিল।

তিরিশে জানুয়ারির সমস্ত অনুষ্ঠানের মধ্যে বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য অনুষ্ঠান বেলা ঝরাটা তিরিশের ‘সিম্পজিয়াম’ (Symposium)। এই অনুষ্ঠানের প্রেসিডেন্ট হয়েছিলেন

প্রথম ভারতীয় মহিলা-ভাইস-চ্যান্সেলার শ্রীমতী হংসা মেহ্‌তা। ইনি বরোদা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ভাইস-চ্যান্সেলার। স্ত্রী-শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে নানা আলোচনায় যোগদান করেছিলেন ফরাসী দেশের শ্রীমতী বোসেনেক, ইংল্যান্ডের জে. এল. লিটার এবং আমেরিকার মিঃ লুইস্‌। এ ছাড়া শ্রীযুক্ত প্রিয়রঞ্জন সেন, শ্রীযুক্ত কালিদাস নাগ এবং শ্রীমতী পরিমল দাস প্রভৃতিও যোগ দিয়েছিলেন।

আঠারশ পঞ্চাশের ছয়ই নভেম্বর বেথুন বিদ্যালয়-ভবনের ভিত্তিস্থাপন হয়। উনিশশ পঞ্চাশের এক সম্মুখ্য সেই স্বপ্নই আমাদের চোখে ভাসছিল। নারীশিক্ষা নারীকে স্বাভাবিক ও স্বাধীনতা দিয়েছে। বিদ্যাসাগর প্রমুখ মনীষীরা শিক্ষিতা নারীর যে রূপ দেখতে চেয়েছিলেন সে রূপ কতখানি মূর্ত হয়েছে আজকের শিক্ষিত নারীসম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে তা নিয়ে অনেক বাগবিতণ্ডা যদি থাকে তো থাক—কিন্তু এই বিদ্যাভবনে ব'সে সব যুগের বিদ্যার্থিনীদের সঙ্গেই সেদিন একই হৃৎস্পন্দন অনুভব করেছিলাম, বিদ্যাশ্রীমন্ডিত জীবনের এক আদর্শ আমাদের একইভাবে অনুপ্রাণিত করেছিল।

পয়লা ফেব্রুয়ারিতে সর্বশেষ অনুষ্ঠান হ'য়ে গেল। সে অনুষ্ঠানের বিষয়বস্তু ছিল “ভারতীয় সংগীত ও নৃত্যের বিভিন্ন ধারা ও তার ক্রমবিকাশ”। প্রাচীন ও নূতন, গুরু ও লঘু নৃত্য ও সংগীতের মূর্ছনায় উৎসবস্থল মূর্ছারিত হ'ল। এই অনুষ্ঠানের প্রারম্ভে ছিল বেদগান, সমাপ্তিতে জাতীয় সংগীত। সমবেত কণ্ঠে ভারতের জাতীয় সংগীত ধ্বনিত হ'ল—“জনগণমন অধিনায়ক জয় হে”—।

বর্তমানকালীন ভারতের প্রথম নারীশিক্ষাভবনের ঐতিহাসিকী শতবার্ষিকী এইভাবেই সম্পন্ন হ'ল। আজ শ্রদ্ধানত চিন্তে স্মরণ করছি সেই মহাপুরুষদের যাঁরা চেয়েছিলেন নারীকে বিদ্যাশ্রীমন্ডিতা দেখতে, যাঁরা চেষ্টা করেছিলেন এই আদর্শকে সফল করতে, আর আজ যাঁরা এসে পেঁাচ্ছেন বিদ্যালোকবার্তাবাহী হ'য়ে আমাদের হাতে তুলে দিতে জ্ঞানপ্রদীপের অতুজ্জ্বল শিখা।



রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলনে বঙ্গমহিলা

শ্রীযোগেশচন্দ্র বাগল

উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর সপ্তম দশক হইতে বঙ্গদেশে রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলন দানা বাঁধিয়া উঠে। ভারত-সভা সিবিল সার্ভিসে ভারতবাসীর প্রবেশে বাধা বিদূরণের জন্য স্বদেশে ও বিদেশে আন্দোলন সূরু করিয়া দিয়াছিলেন। সভা এই উদ্দেশ্যে বিলাতে পাঠান ব্যারিস্টার লালমোহন ঘোষকে। কাশিমবাজারের মহারাণী স্বর্ণময়ী কয়েক সহস্র টাকা দিয়া তাঁহার বিলাত পরিক্রমা সম্ভব করিয়া দেন।

ভারতের জাতীয় কংগ্রেস প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় ১৮৮৫ সনে। ইহার চারি বৎসর পরে, ১৮৮৯ সনের বোম্বাই অধিবেশনে স্বর্ণপ্রথম ভারতীয় মহিলা যোগদান করেন। বাংলাদেশ হইতে গিয়াছিলেন ডাঃ কাদম্বিনী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় এবং “ভারতী ও বালক”-সম্পাদক স্বর্ণকুমারী ঘোষাল (দেবী)। কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে এই দুইজন কৃতী মহিলার যোগাযোগ ক্রমেই ঘনিষ্ঠতর হইল।

কাদম্বিনী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় ১৮৯০ সনে কংগ্রেসের কলিকাতা অধিবেশনে প্রতিনিধিরূপে উপস্থিত ছিলেন। অধিবেশনশেষে সভাপতি স্যার ফিরোজশাহ্ মেহতাকে একটি নাতিদীর্ঘ বক্তৃতা দিয়া তিনি ধন্যবাদ প্রদান করিয়াছিলেন। স্বদেশী আন্দোলনের মরশুমে, ১৯০৬ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে কলিকাতায় বরোদার মহারাণীর নেতৃত্বে একটি মহিলা সম্মেলন হয়। কাদম্বিনী এই সম্মেলনের একজন প্রধান উদ্যোক্তা ছিলেন। দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার ট্রান্সভালে ১৯০৮ সনে মহাত্মা গান্ধী সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলন নতুন করিয়া আরম্ভ করেন। তখন কলিকাতায় ইহার সহায়তাকল্পে একটি সমিতি স্থাপিত হয়। এই সমিতির সভাপতি রূপে কাদম্বিনী বিস্তর শ্রম স্বীকার করিয়া অর্থাৎ সংগ্রহে প্রবৃত্ত হইলেন। ১৯২২ সনে কবি কামিনী রায়ের সঙ্গে তিনি বিহার ও উড়িষ্যার কয়লার খনি অঞ্চলে ভ্রমণ করিয়া নারী ও শিশু শ্রমিকদের দুরবস্থা সম্বন্ধে সাক্ষাৎ ভাবে অভিজ্ঞতা লাভ করিয়াছিলেন।

স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী কংগ্রেসের কার্যে ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জড়িত হইয়া পড়েন। তাঁহার স্বামী জানকীনাথ ঘোষাল বহু বৎসর যাবৎ কংগ্রেসের সম্পাদকের কার্য করেন। স্বর্ণকুমারী নারী জাতির মধ্যে স্বাদেশিকতা ও আত্মনির্ভরতাবোধ উন্মেষে বিশেষ যত্নপর হন। এই দুইটির জন্য একদিকে তিনি যেমন লেখনী পরিচালনা করিতেন অন্য দিকে “সখী সমিতি”র মধ্য দিয়াও এই সকল কার্যকে রূপ দিতে সচেষ্ট ছিলেন। জনসাধারণের মধ্যে স্বদেশী দ্রব্যের ব্যবহারে তাঁহার প্রচার ও প্রয়াস লক্ষণীয়। দ্বিতীয় কন্যা সরলা দেবীর মধ্যেই তাঁহার চিন্তা-ধারা যেন মূর্ত হইয়া দেখা দিয়াছিল।

সরলা দেবী (চৌধুরাণী) বাংলাদেশে নবজাতীয়তার অন্যতম উদ্যোক্তা। “ভারতী” সম্পাদনা কালে (১৩০২-১৪) তিনি দীর্ঘ ম্বাদশ বৎসর ধরিয়া স্বদেশবাসিগণকে বীর্ঘ্য ও সাহসের উপাসক হইতে উপদেশ দিয়াছেন। বাঙালীদের মধ্যে শক্তিচর্চার তিনি একজন প্রধান উদ্যোক্তা। ‘প্রতাপাদিত্য উৎসব’, ‘উদয়াদিত্য উৎসব’ (১৯০৩) এই উদ্দেশ্যেই কলিকাতায় প্রথম অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। তিনি পালোয়ান ও কুস্তিবীর দ্বারা যুবকদের মধ্যে রীতিমত ভাবে ব্যায়ামচর্চার ব্যবস্থা করেন। তৎকর্তৃক “বীরাস্তমী রত্নে”র (১৯০৪) অনুষ্ঠানেরও উদ্দেশ্য ছিল দেশবাসীকে শক্তিমন্ডে উদ্ভূত করা। স্বদেশী দ্রব্য সাধারণের মধ্যে চালু

করিবার নিমিত্ত তিনি “লক্ষ্মীর ভান্ডার” স্থাপন করেন। স্বদেশপ্রেমোদ্দীপক বহু সঙ্গীতেরও তিনি রচয়িতা। তৎ-রচিত একাধিক গান তাঁহারই তত্ত্বাবধানে কংগ্রেসে গীত হয়। ‘বন্দে মাতরম্’ সঙ্গীতও তিনি কংগ্রেসে প্রথম গান করেন। ১৯০৫ সনে পঞ্জাবের অন্যতম নেতা রামভূজ দত্ত চৌধুরীর সঙ্গে তিনি পরিণীতা হন। ইহার পর পঞ্জাবই বিশেষ করিয়া তাঁহার কর্মক্ষেত্র হইল। সরলা দেবীই ভারতীয় নারীদের মধ্যে প্রথম মহাত্মা গান্ধীর অসহ-যোগ প্রস্তাবকে অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাপন করিয়াছিলেন।

ভগিনী নিবেদিতা : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ-শিষ্যা আইরিশ মহিলা ভগিনী নিবেদিতা পূর্বে আয়ারল্যান্ডের বিপ্লবী দলের অন্তর্ভুক্ত ছিলেন। স্বামিজীর মৃত্যুর (৪ঠা জুলাই, ১৯০২) অব্যবহিত পরে তিনি রামকৃষ্ণ মিশনের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করিয়া স্বাধীনভাবে কার্য্য করিতে আরম্ভ করেন। বলা বাহুল্য, রাজনীতিই এই সম্পর্কচ্ছেদের মূলে ছিল। তিনি শ্রীঅরবিন্দের সহযোগে বাংলাদেশে বিপ্লবী আদর্শ প্রচারে রতী হন। বিপ্লব-কার্যের সঙ্গে তাঁহার প্রত্যক্ষ যোগাযোগের কথাও জানা যায়। কিন্তু তাঁহার প্রধান ও স্থায়ী কৃতিত্ব—স্বদেশীয় শিক্ষা, সাহিত্য, ইতিহাস, প্রকৃতি ও শিল্পকলার অনুশীলনে বাঙালী তথা ভারতবাসীদের অনুপ্রাণিত করার মধ্যে। তিনি এই উদ্দেশ্যে বিস্তর সারগর্ভ প্রবন্ধ ও পুস্তক লিখিয়া-ছিলেন। স্বদেশী আন্দোলনকালে তিনি বাঙালী মহিলাদের চরখা গ্রহণ করিতে পরামর্শ দেন। এ দিক দিয়া ভগিনী নিবেদিতা মহাত্মা গান্ধীর অগ্রগামী।

স্বদেশী আন্দোলনের সাফল্যে বঙ্গ-মহিলাদের কৃতিত্ব কম নহে। ইহার নেতিবাচক (ধ্বংসমূলক) ও ইতিবাচক (গঠনমূলক) দুই কার্য্যই নারীসমাজের যোগাযোগ ছিল নিবিড় ও ঘনিষ্ঠ। বিলাতী দ্রব্য, বিশেষ করিয়া বিলাতী বস্ত্র বজ্জনে বাংলার নারীগণ সর্বশেষ তৎপর হন। তখন প্রকাশ্যে রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলনে যোগ না দিয়াও মহিলারা নিজ নিজ গৃহে, মহল্লায় ও পল্লীতে এতদ্বিষয়ে সার্থক প্রচার কার্য্য চালাইয়াছিলেন। বিপ্লবাত্মক প্রয়াস যখন সূর্য্য হয় তখন অন্তরাল হইতে কেহ কেহ বিপ্লবীদের সহায়তা করিতেন। স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের কনিষ্ঠ ভ্রাতা ভূপেন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের (এখন, ডক্টর) কারাদণ্ডের পর মাতা ভুবনেশ্বরীকে কলিকাতার নারীসমাজের পক্ষে মানপত্র প্রদান করা হয়। এতদুপলক্ষে অনুষ্ঠিত সভার সভাপতিত্ব করেন স্বদেশী আন্দোলনের অন্যতম নেতা, সঞ্জীবনী-সম্পাদক কৃষ্ণকুমার মিত্রের সহধর্ম্মিণী লীলাবতী মিত্র।

গঠনমূলক কার্য্যও নারীগণের সহায়তা বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য। কবিতায়, গানে, প্রবন্ধে তাঁহারা শূদ্ধ নারীসমাজ নহে, নরনারী নিষিদ্ধশেষে সকলকেই উদ্বেগু করিতে লাগিলেন। তাঁত, চরখা প্রচলনে তাঁহারা মনোযোগী হন। ‘ভারতীয়’ অন্যতর সম্পাদিকা হিরন্ময়ী দেবী এই মাসিকে ইহার বর্ণনা প্রদান করেন। এ বিষয়ে কলিকাতায় কুমুদিনী মিত্র (পরে, বসু) অগ্রণী হন। তিনি স্বদেশী সঙ্গীত দ্বারা জনগণকে উৎসাহিত করেন। ‘সুপ্রভাত’ মাসিকের মাধ্যমেও তিনি স্বদেশীর বাস্তব জনগণের মধ্যে পৌঁছাইয়া দিতে থাকেন। ‘ভারতী’ মাসিকে “মায়ের কোঁটা” স্থাপন দ্বারা জাতীয় ভান্ডারে অর্থ দানের সংকল্পের কথা প্রকাশিত হয়। স্থানে স্থানে মহিলাগণ স্বদেশী দ্রব্যের প্রদর্শনীরও আয়োজন করিয়াছিলেন। রায়ম্বে ম্যাকডোনাল্ডের সহধর্ম্মিণী ১৯০৯ সনে স্বামীর সঙ্গে ভারত পর্য্যটনে আগমন করেন। বাংলাদেশের নারীসমাজের রাষ্ট্রীয় চেতনা ও রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যে কার্য্যকলাপ দেখিয়া তিনি মুগ্ধ হইয়াছিলেন।

প্রথম মহাসমর (১৯১৪-১৮) : এই সময় বিপ্লবীদের কার্য্য বাংলাদেশের সীমা অতিক্রম করিয়া সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষে ছড়াইয়া পড়িয়াছিল। বাংলার নারীগণ বিপ্লবীদের নানাভাবে

সহায়তা না করিলে ইহা ততটা প্রসার লাভ করিতে পারিত কি না সন্দেহ। সংবাদ আদান-প্রদান, অস্ত্র-সংরক্ষণ, বিপ্লবীদের আশ্রয়দান—তাহাদের কার্য এই সকলের মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল। বিপ্লবীকে আশ্রয়দান ও সাহায্য করার অপরাধে বীরভূমের দুর্কাড়িবালা ঘোষ শত্রু কারাদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত হন।

বঙ্গকন্যা সরোজিনী নাইডুর রাষ্ট্রীয় কার্যে যোগদান এই সময়ের একটি স্মরণীয় ঘটনা। কংগ্রেস, মোসলেম লীগ ও প্রাদেশিক সম্মেলনাদিতে যোগ দিয়া রাজনীতির কঠোর কাঠামোর ভিতরে তিনি রস পরিবেশন করিতে থাকেন। জাতীয় আদর্শ তাঁহার কবিসুলভ বর্ণনায় নূতন রূপে আমাদের নিকট প্রতিভাত হইল। ১৯১৫, '১৬ ও '১৭ সনের কংগ্রেসে প্রস্তাবাবলী উত্থাপন ও সমর্থনে তিনি উদ্দীপনাপূর্ণ বক্তৃতা দিয়াছিলেন।

অসহযোগ আন্দোলন : মহাত্মা গান্ধী-প্রবর্তিত এবং বাংলাদেশে প্রধানতঃ দেশবন্ধু চিত্তরঞ্জন দাশ পরিচালিত অসহযোগ আন্দোলনে নারীগণ যোগদান করিয়াছিলেন। এবার তাঁহারা প্রকাশ্য ভাবে রাজনৈতিক কার্যে অবতীর্ণ হন। নানা রকম অপমান, লাঞ্ছনা, দণ্ড, কষ্ট সহ্য করিতেও তাঁহারা পশ্চাৎপদ হন নাই। মফস্বলেও নারীগণ বিশেষ ধৈর্য ও সাহসের পরিচয় দেন। বীরেন্দ্রনাথ শাসমলের নেতৃত্বে মেদিনীপুর জেলার অন্তর্গত কাঁথিতে যে ইউনিয়ন বোর্ড বর্জ্জন আন্দোলন সাফল্যমণ্ডিত হইয়াছিল, তাহার মূলে ছিল নারীর অপদূর্ব সাহস, ত্যাগ এবং দৃঃখবরণে দৃঢ় প্রতিজ্ঞা। কলিকাতার নারীগণ সাধারণ সভাসমিতির অনুষ্ঠানে অগ্রণী হন। ১৯২১ সনের এই ডিসেম্বর রাস্তায় খন্দর ফেরী করিতে গিয়া চিত্তরঞ্জন-পত্নী শ্রীযুক্তা বাসন্তী দেবী, শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী ও শ্রীযুক্তা সুনীতি দেবী পুলিস কর্তৃক ধৃত হন। তাঁহাদিগকে কয়েক ঘণ্টা আটক রাখিয়া পরে ছাড়িয়া দেওয়া হইল। ইহাতে দেশের ভিতরে খুব সাড়া পড়িয়া যায়, সাধারণের মনে বিশেষ বিক্ষোভেরও সৃষ্টি হয়।

কংগ্রেসের গঠনমূলক কার্য পরিচালনার জন্যও নারীগণ কলিকাতায় ইতিপূর্বেই সংঘ-বদ্ধ হইয়াছিলেন। শ্রীযুক্তা বাসন্তী দেবী দেশবন্ধুর কারাবাসকালে ১৯২১-২২ সনে বঙ্গীয় প্রাদেশিক কংগ্রেস কমিটির সভাপতি পদে বৃত্ত হন। ১৯২২ সনের এপ্রিল মাসে চট্টগ্রামে অনুষ্ঠিত বঙ্গীয় প্রাদেশিক সম্মেলনে তিনি সভাপতিত্ব করিয়াছিলেন। অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের সময় শ্রীযুক্তা মোহিনী দেবীর রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যে শ্রম ও ত্যাগ স্বীকার জনচিন্তে যুগপৎ প্রম্ভা ও প্রশংসার উদ্বেগ করে।

নারী-কর্ম্মমন্দির : ১৯২১ সনে দেশবন্ধুর অনুপ্রাণনায় তদীয় ভগিনী শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী কর্তৃক প্রধানতঃ গঠনমূলক কার্যের জন্য নারী-কর্ম্মমন্দির প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। চরখা ও তাঁত প্রচলন, বাড়ী বাড়ী নারীদের মধ্যে স্বরাজ আন্দোলনের উদ্দেশ্য প্রচার প্রভৃতি উক্ত মন্দিরের প্রধান কাজ ছিল। কলিকাতা ও মফস্বল হইতে বহু মহিলা কর্ম্মী আসিয়া ইহাতে যোগদান করেন। কুমিল্লার শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার ইহাদের মধ্যে ছিলেন অন্যতম। স্বেচ্ছাসেবক বাহিনী ও সভাসমিতি অর্ডিন্যান্স দ্বারা বেআইনী ঘোষিত হয় এবং পুরুষ নেতৃবৃন্দ স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদল সমেত ১৯২১ সনের শেষের দিকে ধৃত হইয়া কারারুদ্ধ হন। তখন সভাসমিতি অনুষ্ঠানের ভার নারী-কর্ম্মমন্দির গ্রহণ করেন। শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী অসুস্থ হইয়া পড়িলে এই কার্যের ভার পড়ে শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদারের উপর। তিনি সভা-সমিতি পরিচালনা এবং অন্যান্য রাজনৈতিক কার্য করিবার সময় অপদূর্ব সাহস ও তেজস্বিতা দেখাইয়াছিলেন। 'নারী-কর্ম্মমন্দিরের কার্য পরিচালনা করিতে অসমর্থ হওয়ায় উর্মিলা দেবী কিছুকাল পরে ইহা বন্ধ করিয়া দেন। তবে রাজনীতির সঙ্গো তিনি কখনও সংস্রব ছাড়েন নাই। ১৯২৬ সনে তিনি সরোজিনী নাইডুর কংগ্রেস-সভাপতিত্ব কালে তাঁহার

সঙ্গে পর্যটন করেন এবং রাজনৈতিক প্রচারকার্যে যোগ দেন।

মহিলা-কম্মী সংসদ : নারী-কম্মমন্দির উঠিয়া গেলে, শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার এই সংসদ গঠন করেন। দেশবন্ধুর জীবিতকালেই ইহা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। পূর্বোক্ত প্রতিষ্ঠানের কার্যপ্রণালী বেশীর ভাগ এখানে অনুসৃত হইত। সংসদের একটি মহিলা-আবাস ছিল। এখানে মফস্বলের নিঃসম্বল নারীদের আশ্রয় দেওয়া হইত। তাঁহাদিগকে তাঁত, চরখা, সেলাই ও বুননের কাজ শিখাইয়া উপার্জনক্ষম করার চেষ্টা চলিত। সংসদ করপোরেশনের অধীনে একটি বালিকা বিদ্যালয় পরিচালনা করিতেন। বয়স্কা সদস্যরা রাজনৈতিক কার্যে যোগ দিতেন। দেশবন্ধু যে পাঁচজন সদস্য লইয়া প্রথমে স্বরাজ্যদল গঠন করেন, শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা ছিলেন তাঁহাদের মধ্যে একমাত্র মহিলা সদস্য।

শ্রীযুক্তা সন্তোষকুমারী গুপ্তা অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের সময় হইতে দেশবন্ধুর নেতৃত্বে বিভিন্ন সভা-সমিতিতে ইংরেজী, বাংলা ও হিন্দীতে বক্তৃতা দিয়া জনগণকে স্বরাজ্যমুখী করিয়া তুলেন। ১৯২৩ সনে তারকেশ্বর সত্যাগ্রহেও তিনি সাহস ও বুদ্ধিমত্তার পরিচয় দেন। কিন্তু এই সময়কার শ্রমিক আন্দোলনকে কংগ্রেস-আদর্শানুগ করিয়া তুলিতে তিনি বিশেষ কৃতিত্ব দেখান। বাংলা ও হিন্দীতে “শ্রমিক” নামে শ্রমিকদের কথা বলার জন্য সাপ্তাহিক পত্র প্রকাশ করেন। শ্রমিকদের ভিতরে তিনি অনেক কাজও করিয়াছিলেন। তাহার পরে শ্রমিক আন্দোলনের নেতৃত্ব করেন শ্রীযুক্তা মোহিনী দেবীর কন্যা ডক্টর প্রীপ্রভাবতী দাশগুপ্তা। কলিকাতার মেথর ধর্মঘট তাহার নেতৃত্বে পরিচালিত হইয়াছিল। ইদানীন্তন-কালে ডাঃ শ্রীমৈত্রয়ী বসু স্বাদেশিকতার ভিত্তিতে শ্রমিক আন্দোলন পরিচালনায় যথেষ্ট সহায়তা করিতেছেন।

জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় কংগ্রেসের কার্যে আত্মনিয়োগ করিয়াছিলেন। ১৯২০ সনে কলিকাতায় কংগ্রেসের বিশেষ অধিবেশনে তিনি স্বেচ্ছাসেবিকা বাহিনীর অধিনায়িকা ছিলেন। তিনি এই কার্যে অতিশয় দক্ষতার সহিত সম্পন্ন করেন। কলিকাতা করপোরেশনে স্বরাজ্য দলের প্রাধান্য হইলে মেয়র দেশবন্ধু চিত্তরঞ্জনের আহবানে তিনি প্রাইমারী এডুকেশন কমিটির সহায়ক সদস্য (Associate Member) নিযুক্ত হন। ইহার পর হইতে তিন বৎসরের অধিককাল কংগ্রেসের উদ্দেশ্য প্রচারকল্পে বিভিন্ন সভা-সমিতি, রাজনৈতিক সম্মেলন, যুব সম্মেলন ও মহিলা সম্মেলনে সভাপতিরূপে, বা কখন কখন বিশেষভাবে আহূত হইয়া যোগদান করেন। ১৯৩০ সনে ও ১৯৩২ সনের সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলনে তিনি কারাদণ্ডেও দণ্ডিত হইয়াছিলেন। জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী ১৯৩৩ সনে করপোরেশনের সাধারণ নির্বাচনে স্বতন্ত্র সদস্য হিসাবে বিপুল ভোটাদিক্যে নির্বাচিত হন। ইহার পর কিছুকাল রাজনীতি হইতে তিনি প্রায় অবসর গ্রহণ করেন। পুনরায় ১৯৪৬ সনে যখন আজাদ হিন্দ ফৌজের মোকদ্দমার সময় ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের শোভাযাত্রা ধর্মতলায় আটক করা হয় তখন জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী পুনরায় তাহাদের পাশে আসিয়া দাঁড়ান। ইহার পরই গোলমাল থামাইতে গিয়া তিনি দক্ষিণ কলিকাতায় মোটর দুর্ঘটনায় পতিত হন এবং সেই দিনই দেহত্যাগ করেন।

সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলনকালে (১৯৩০ ও ১৯৩২) বাংলার নারীসমাজে যে অভূতপূর্ব জাগরণ লক্ষিত হয় তাহার প্রস্তুতিকার্য চলে কয়েক বৎসর পূর্ব হইতেই। পূর্বোক্তাধিত নারীগণের রাজনৈতিক কার্যকলাপ ইহার পক্ষে সহায় হইয়াছিল সন্দেহ নাই। কিন্তু বাংলার রাজনীতিকক্ষে তখন নতুন বিপ্লবী আদর্শে কম্মা সুরু হইয়া গিয়াছিল। আর এ বিষয়ে দুইটি বিশিষ্ট সংঘ আত্মনিয়োগ করে।

দীপালী সঙ্ঘ : শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা নাগ (বর্তমানে, রায়) ঢাকায় ১৯২৪ সনে দীপালী সঙ্ঘ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। নারীজাতির মধ্যে শিক্ষা-বিস্তারের উদ্দেশ্য লইয়া সঙ্ঘ গঠিত হয় বটে। কিন্তু তাহাদের মধ্যে আত্মশক্তির উদ্বেগধনেই ইহা বিশেষভাবে নিয়োজিত হয়। মেয়েদের শারীর চর্চা এবং লাঠি ও ছোরা খেলা শিক্ষা দ্বারা আত্মরক্ষার আয়োজন করে এই সঙ্ঘ। কলিকাতায় এবং শ্রীহট্টেও ইহার শাখা স্থাপিত হয়। সঙ্ঘের অধীনে দীপালী ছাত্রী সঙ্ঘ স্থাপিত হইলে ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে রাজনীতির চর্চাও ইহার কর্তৃপক্ষ সূরু করিয়া দেন। রেণুকা সেন, প্রীতিলতা ওয়াসেদদার (চট্টগ্রাম বিপ্লবীদের অন্যতম অধিনায়িকা) প্রভৃতি ছাত্রীও সঙ্ঘের সভ্য ছিলেন। কংগ্রেস-রাজনীতির সঙ্গে দীপালী সঙ্ঘ বড় একটা যোগ রাখিত না। কারণ ইহার আদর্শ ছিল বিপ্লবধর্মী। ১৩৩৮ সনের বৈশাখ মাস হইতে দীপালী সঙ্ঘের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা নাগের সম্পাদনায় ইহার মুখপত্রস্বরূপ যে 'জয়শ্রী' মাসিকপত্র প্রকাশিত হয় তাহাও এই আদর্শই প্রচার করিতে থাকে। কলিকাতায় শ্রীসঙ্ঘ নামে নারীদের একটি বিপ্লবী সঙ্ঘ ছিল। দীপালী সঙ্ঘ ইহার সঙ্গে একযোগে কার্য করিত। বিপ্লব-কার্যের সহায়ক সন্দেহে শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা ও তাহার সহকর্মীরা বিনা বিচারে আটক হইয়াছিলেন, কেহ কেহ কারাদণ্ডও ভোগ করেন।

মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঙ্ঘ : দেশপ্রেম ও বৈশ্ববিক প্রেরণা নারীদের মধ্যে প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্যে শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা ঘোষ ১৯২৭ সনে এই সঙ্ঘ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। ইহার সভাপতি হইলেন সূভাষচন্দ্র বসুর জননী প্রভাবতী বসু এবং সম্পাদিকা স্বয়ং লতিকা ঘোষ। শ্রীযুক্তা অরুণালা সেনগুপ্ত সহকারী সম্পাদিকা পদে নিযুক্ত হন। সঙ্ঘের সভ্যদের কোনরূপ চাঁদা দিতে হইত না। কলিকাতায় প্রথম সঙ্ঘের কাজ আরম্ভ হয়। কাজের সুবিধার জন্য এই নগরীকে কয়েকটি কেন্দ্রে ভাগ করা হইল। শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা প্রত্যেক কেন্দ্রে গমন করিতেন এবং তথাকার নারীগণের সঙ্গে আত্মীয়র মত মিশিয়া আলাপ-আলোচনায় রত হইতেন। ইহাদের মধ্যে স্বত্বপাশিকতা এবং নিরক্ষরা মহিলাই ছিলেন সংখ্যায় বেশী। কেন্দ্রের নারীকর্মীগণকে স্বাদেশিকতা ও বিপ্লবাত্মক পদুস্তকাদি দেওয়া হইত। তাহারা ইহার মর্মান্ব উহারদিকে বদ্বাইয়া দিতেন। এইরূপে গৃহস্থ মহিলাদের সঙ্গে মেলামেশা হওয়ায় এবং তাহারা সাধারণ রাজনীতির সঙ্গে পরিচিত থাকায় রাজনৈতিক সভাসমিতিতে যোগদান করিতেও তাহাদের পক্ষে কোন বাধা হয় না। জেলা শহরে ও মহাকুমাগড়ুলিতে সঙ্ঘের শাখা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হইয়াছিল।

১৯২৮ সনের কলিকাতা কংগ্রেসে সঙ্ঘের সম্পাদিকা শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকার অধিনায়কত্বে একটি নারী স্বেচ্ছাসেবিকা বাহিনী গঠিত হয়। সামরিক রীতিতে গঠিত ও সূভাষচন্দ্র-পরিচালিত স্বেচ্ছাসেবকবাহিনীর অঙ্গীভূত ছিল এই বাহিনীটি। অন্যান্য দুই শত জন কলেজের ছাত্রীও স্বেচ্ছাসেবিকাবাহিনীতে যোগ দেয়। সূভাষচন্দ্রের বিপ্লবী ভাবাদর্শে তাহারাও অনুপ্রাণিত হইল। ইহার পর বৎসর সমগ্র বাংলাদেশে যুবশক্তি সংগঠনের আয়োজন চলে। প্রত্যেক স্থলে রাজনৈতিক সম্মেলনের সঙ্গে যুব সম্মেলন ও মহিলা সম্মেলনও অনুষ্ঠিত হইত। মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঙ্ঘের পক্ষে শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা ঘোষ বহুস্থানে মহিলা সম্মেলনের নেতৃত্ব করিতেন। সূভাষচন্দ্রের প্রগতিশীল রাজনীতির অনুবর্তী হইয়া কলিকাতায় এই সময় একটি ছাত্রীসঙ্ঘও স্থাপিত হয়।

সত্যগ্রহ আন্দোলন : মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঙ্ঘ। সত্যগ্রহ আন্দোলনে কলিকাতা ও মফস্বলে নারীসমাজ যে বিপুলভাবে সাড়া দেয় তাহার মূলে মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঙ্ঘের কৃতিত্ব অনেকখানি। নিষিদ্ধ সভা-সমিতি-শোভাযাত্রার অনুষ্ঠানে, সরকার পক্ষে পদূলিস, সার্জেন্ট

রাষ্ট্রীয় আন্দোলনে বঙ্গমহিলা



শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী
নাব্য কর্মমন্দিরের প্রতিষ্ঠাত্রী



শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার
মহিলা বঙ্গমণ্ডল সংসদের প্রতিষ্ঠাত্রী



শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা রায়
দীপালী সংঘের প্রতিষ্ঠাত্রী



শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা ঘোষ
মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সংঘের প্রতিষ্ঠাত্রী

সত্যগ্রহ আলোকনে



জ্যোতির্ময়ী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়
রাষ্ট্রীয় কম্মে উৎসর্গীকৃত



মাতঙ্গিনী হাজরা
আগষ্ট বঙ্গবৈ (১৯৬২) নিহত

বিশ্বব-প্রচেষ্টায়



শ্রীযুদ্ভা শান্তি দাশ
সফল বিশ্বব কম্মে অগ্রণী



প্রীতিভতা ওয়াদেন্দার
পাহাড়তলী (চট্টগ্রাম) অভিযানের নেত্রী

ও ঘোড়সোওয়ারের আয়োজন সত্ত্বেও নারীগণ আগ্রহে যোগদান করেন। ইহাদের মধ্যে নিরক্ষরা গৃহস্থ বহু, কন্যা ও মাতা ছিলেন বহু। বিদেশী বস্ত্র ও মাদক দ্রব্যের দোকানে পিকেকেটিং কার্যও সঞ্চ পরিচালনা করে। এই কার্যের নেতৃত্ব করেন শ্রীযুক্তা অরুণালা সেনগুপ্ত। নারীগণ এই কার্য করিতে গিয়া প্রথমে নানারূপ নিষাতিত ও পরে কারারুদ্ধ হন। স্কুল-কলেজে পিকেকেটিং ব্যাপারেও মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঞ্চ বিশেষ উদ্যোগী হইল। তাহাদের এই কার্যে ছাত্রীসঞ্চ বিশেষ সহায় হয়। শ্রীযুক্তা লতিকা ঘোষ সর্বোপরি থাকিয়া এই সকল তত্ত্বাবধান করিতেন।

সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলন : নারী সত্যাগ্রহ সমিতি। মহাত্মা গান্ধীর বিখ্যাত দণ্ডীষাত্রার পরদিন ১৩ই মার্চ (১৯৩০) কয়েকজন প্রবীণা কংগ্রেসী মহিলা নারীদের পক্ষে সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলনকে সাফল্যমণ্ডিত করিবার জন্য উক্ত নামে কলিকাতায় একটি স্বতন্ত্র সমিতি গঠন করেন। ইহার সভাপতি হন শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী ও সম্পাদিকা শ্রীযুক্তা শান্তি দাস (বর্তমানে, কবীর) ও বিমলপ্রতিভা দেবী। শ্রীযুক্তা মোহিনী দেবী, জ্যোতিষ্ময়ী গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখ কয়েকজন বিখ্যাত কংগ্রেসকর্ম্মী ইহার সহকারী সভাপতি ও সদস্য নিষাচিত হইলেন। মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঞ্চের ন্যায় নারী সত্যাগ্রহ সমিতিও আইন অমান্য-মূলক বিভিন্ন কার্যে লিপ্ত হয়। তবে বড়বাজার অঞ্চলে বিদেশী বস্ত্রের দোকানে পিকেকেটিংই সমিতি বিশেষভাবে পরিচালনা করে। ইহার ফলে সেখান হইতে বহু মহিলা আইন অমান্য করার অপরাধে কারারুদ্ধ হন। সমিতির সভাপতি শ্রীযুক্তা উর্মিলা দেবী বলেন, বড়বাজারে এমন জোর পিকেকেটিং চলিয়াছিল এবং তাহাতে নারীদের এতই নিষাতিত ভোগ করিতে হয় যে, সেখানকার ধনী ব্যবসায়ীরা বিদেশী বস্ত্রের আমদানী প্রায় বন্ধ করিয়া দিয়াছিলেন।

মফস্বলেও নারীগণ সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলনে যোগদান করেন এবং সেখান হইতেও অনেকে কারারুদ্ধ হন। মেদিনীপুর, বাঁকুড়া, ঢাকা, কুমিল্লা ও শ্রীহট্টের মহিলাদের কার্য এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য। মেদিনীপুর হইতে মার্ভাঙ্গনী হাজরা এবং কুমিল্লা হইতে কন্যা, পুত্র ও নাতিনীসহ শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার কারাবরণ করিলেন। কোন কোন মহিলা সরকারের অনাচারের প্রতিবাদে সরকারী চাকুরীতেও ইস্তফা দেন।

১৯৩১ সনের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর সঙ্গে সরোজিনী নাইডু বিলাতে গোল-টেবিল বৈঠকে যোগদান করিয়াছিলেন। স্বরাজ লাভের দিক হইতে সেখানে বিশেষ কিছুই সুবিধা না হওয়ায় মহাত্মাজী ১৯৩২ সনের জানুয়ারী মাসে ভারতে ফিরিয়া আসেন। এবারে ব্রিটিশ গবর্নমেন্টের বিরুদ্ধে যে আন্দোলন উপস্থিত হয় তাহা 'নিষাতিয় সত্যাগ্রহ' নামে পরিচিত। বাংলাদেশ হইতে এবারেও বহু নারী আইন-অমান্যের উদ্যোগকালে কারারুদ্ধ হন। নিষিদ্ধ কংগ্রেসের সভাপতিত্ব করিতে গিয়া শ্রীযুক্তা নেলী সেনগুপ্ত ১৯৩৩ সনের এপ্রিল মাসে নিষাতিত হন। তিনি ইতিপূর্বে দীর্ঘকাল স্বামী দেশপ্রিয় যতীন্দ্র-মোহন সেনগুপ্তের সঙ্গে থাকিয়া স্বদেশের সেবাকল্পে সানন্দে অশেষ দৃষ্ণ ও ক্রোশভোগ করিয়াছিলেন।

বিস্তারকার্য : দীপালী সঞ্চের কার্যকলাপ, বিশেষ করিয়া মহিলা রাষ্ট্রীয় সঞ্চ এবং মহিলা সম্মেলনগুলির মাধ্যমে স্ভাষচন্দ্রের বিপ্লবী ভাবাদর্শ প্রচার বাংলার তরুণী ও ছাত্রীদের বিপ্লবকার্যে অনুপ্রেরণা দেয়। তবে সত্যাগ্রহ আন্দোলনের সময় অহিংস নরনারীর উপর অকথ্য অত্যাচার-অনাচার তাহাদিগকে এ বিষয়ে আরও উৎসাহ করে। বিপ্লবকার্যের প্রথম প্রকাশ হয় কুমিল্লায়। নবম শ্রেণীর ছাত্রী শ্রীযুক্তা শান্তি ঘোষ (বর্তমানে, দাশ) ও শ্রীযুক্তা সুনীতি চৌধুরীর গুলির আঘাতে ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট স্টিভেন্স ১৯৩১, ১৪ই ডিসেম্বর ইহলীলা

সংবরণ করেন। ১৯৩২, ৬ই ফেব্রুয়ারী কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সমাবর্তন উৎসবে বাংলার লাট জ্যাকসনকে লক্ষ্য করিয়া বি-এ উপাধিধারিণী শ্রীযুক্তা বীণা দাশ (বর্তমানে, ভৌমিক) গুলি ছুড়েন। ইহার পর তরুণীগণের বিপ্লবী কার্যে লিপ্ত থাকার কথা প্রকাশ হইয়া পড়ে। দার্জিলিং ও কলিকাতায় নারীদের দ্বারা আরও কয়েকটি বিপ্লবকার্য অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। বিপ্লবে লিপ্ত মহিলাগণকে গ্রেপ্তার করিয়া সরকার কঠোর দণ্ডে দণ্ডিত করেন, অনেককে সন্দেহবশে রাজবন্দী করিয়া রাখেন।

চট্টগ্রাম : চট্টগ্রাম অস্তাগার লুণ্ঠনের (১৮ই এপ্রিল ১৯৩০) পর সেখানেও নারীগণ অনেকে বিপ্লবীদের আদর্শে অনুপ্রাণিত হন। শ্রীযুক্তা কম্পনা দত্ত প্রমুখ তরুণীগণ উক্ত ঘটনার কিছু পরে আসিয়া সেখানকার বিপ্লবীদের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হইলেন এবং নানাভাবে তাঁহাদিগকে সাহায্য করিতে লাগিলেন। চট্টগ্রামের পাহাড়তলীতে পুরুষের ছদ্মবেশে গমনকালে কম্পনা ধৃত হন। তিনি কারাগার হইতে বিচারের পক্ষেই অন্তর্হিত হইলেন। কিন্তু এ অবস্থায় তাঁহাকে বেশী দিন থাকিতে হয় নাই। তিনি পুনরায় ধৃত হইয়া চট্টগ্রাম বিপ্লবীদের নায়ক সূর্য সেনের সঙ্গে বিচারে যাবজ্জীবন কারাদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত হন। সূর্য সেনের অন্যতম নারী-কর্মী ও শিষ্যা, পূর্বে হইতেই বিপ্লবী আদর্শে অনুপ্রাণিতা প্রীতিলতা ওয়াদেদার পাহাড়-তলীস্থ ইংরেজ ঘাঁটি আক্রমণে নেতৃত্ব করিয়াছিলেন। ব্রিটিশ সেনার হস্তে ধরা পড়িবার পূর্বেই তিনি পটাসিয়াম সায়ানাইড গ্রহণ করিয়া প্রাণ বিসর্জন করেন।

ভারত-শাসন সংস্কার আইনের (১৯৩৫) পরে : রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহে নারীর স্বাভাবিক অধিকার বহু পূর্বেই কংগ্রেস মানিয়া লইয়াছিলেন। সরকারের পক্ষে ইহা স্বীকার করিয়া এতদনুযায়ী ব্যবস্থা অবলম্বন করিতে অত্যধিক বিলম্ব হইয়াছিল। যাহা হউক, নূতন ভারত-শাসন সংস্কার আইনে ভোটাধিকার প্রসারণ পূর্বক শূদ্ধ মহিলাগণের ভোটে স্বতন্ত্র-ভাবে নারীগণকে আইন-সভার সদস্যপদে নিষ্পাচিত হইবার ক্ষমতাও এবারে দেওয়া হইল। ১৯৩৭ সনের সাধারণ নিষ্পাচনে কংগ্রেস কর্মীরূপে শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার প্রমুখ কয়েকজন নারী আইন-সভার সদস্য নিষ্পাচিত হন। কারাদণ্ডিতা ও রাজবন্দী মহিলাগণও ক্রমে কারামুক্ত হইলেন।

সুভাষচন্দ্রের সভাপতিত্বকালে কংগ্রেস কর্তৃক ন্যাশনাল প্ল্যানিং কমিটি গঠিত হয়। বাংলাদেশের নারীসমাজের পক্ষে শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা নাগ ইহার নারী-বিভাগে সদস্যপদ লাভ করেন। কংগ্রেস উচ্চতন কর্তৃপক্ষের সঙ্গে মতবৈধ হেতু সুভাষচন্দ্র দ্বিতীয়বার সভাপতি হইয়াও এই পদ ত্যাগ করিলেন। তিনি অতঃপর ইহা হইতে স্বতন্ত্র হইয়া আসেন এবং ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক গঠন করেন। তখন নারীদের মধ্যে নেতৃস্থানীয়া শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার ও শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা রায় (পূর্বেকার নাগ) তাঁহার সঙ্গে আসিয়া যোগ দেন। আবার শ্রীযুক্তা বীণা দাস প্রমুখ মহিলারা মূল কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে যুক্ত রহিয়া দায়িত্বপূর্ণ পদে অধিষ্ঠিত হইতে থাকেন। তাঁহারা কংগ্রেসের গঠনমূলক কার্যেও রতী হইলেন। হলওয়েল স্মৃতি-স্তম্ভ অপসারণ ব্যাপারে শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা রায় বিশেষভাবে নিগূহীতা হন। সুভাষচন্দ্রের ভারত-ত্যাগের পর শ্রীযুক্তা হেমপ্রভা মজুমদার তাঁহার অনুবর্তীদের নেতৃত্ব পদে বৃত্ত হন। দ্বিতীয় মহাসমরের প্রথমদিকে এই সব ঘটনা ঘটে।

আগস্ট বিপ্লব, ১৯৪২ : রাষ্ট্রীয় কর্মে বঙ্গনারীর যোগদান ও নানারূপ দুঃখ বরণের বিষয় আমরা এতক্ষণে জানিতে পারিলাম। কিন্তু ১৯৪২ সনের আগস্ট বিপ্লবের সময় বাংলার নারীসমাজ ঘেরূপ ঐকান্তিকতার সহিত যোগ দিয়াছিলেন এমনটি পূর্বে কখনও দৃষ্টিগোচর হয় নাই। স্বাধীনতা-মন্তে শহর-পল্লীর সম্বন্ধে শিক্ষিত-অশিক্ষিত নিষ্পাংশে

নারীগণ উজ্জীবিত হইয়াছিলেন। তখন জাপানের আক্রমণ-আশঙ্কায় বাংলার বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে ব্রিটিশ সৈন্য মোতায়েন ছিল। তাই এবারে আন্দোলন দমনে পুর্লিসের সঙ্গে সৈন্যদের সাহায্য লওয়াও কঠিন হইল না। মোদিনীপুর্নের অন্তর্গত তমলুক অঞ্চলের নারীদের বীরত্ব ও আত্মত্যাগ সকলেরই প্রশংসা অর্জন করিয়াছিল। মার্ভাঙ্গনী হাজরা আইন অমান্য পুর্ষক বাহির হইতে একটি শোভাযাত্রা লইয়া শহরের অভ্যন্তরে প্রবেশ করিতেছিলেন, এমন সময় সৈন্যগণ ইহার অগ্রগমনে বাধা দেয়। মার্ভাঙ্গনী শোভাযাত্রার অগ্রভাগে জাতীয় পতাকা হস্তে অগ্রসর হইতে থাকিলে সৈন্যের গুলিতে নিহত হইলেন। অন্যান্য নারীরাও সৈন্যদের হুমকি না শুনিয়া এইখানেই আহত স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদের শত্রুশাস্য রত হন।

গ্রামাঞ্চলেও নারীগণ আন্দোলন পরিচালনা করিতে গিয়া নির্যাতন ভোগ করেন। বোলপুর্ শান্তিনিকেতন অঞ্চলে আগষ্ট বিপ্লব ঘোরালো হইয়া উঠে। আর সেখানে ইহার নেতৃত্ব করেন কবিগুরু রবীন্দ্রনাথের দৌহিত্রী নন্দিতা দেবী ও রানী চন্দ। তাঁহারাও কারাগারে নিক্ষিপ্ত হন। কলিকাতায় বীণা দাস প্রমুখ বহু নারী-কর্মী কারাবরণ করেন। এসময়ে বঙ্গীয় কংগ্রেস কর্মিটর সভাপতির কার্য-পরিচালনা করেন শ্রীযুক্তা লাষণপ্রভা দত্ত।

আগষ্ট বিপ্লবকালে সুভাষচন্দ্র-প্রতিষ্ঠিত ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক ও কংগ্রেস সমাজতন্ত্রী দলও ভারতবর্ষে আশু স্বাধীনতা প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য ইহাতে একান্তভাবে যোগ দিয়াছিল। এই দুইটি দলের অন্তর্ভুক্তা নারীগণও অশেষ দুঃখ বরণ করেন। ইতিপূর্বেই ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের নায়িকা শ্রীযুক্তা লীলা রায় কারারুদ্ধ হইয়াছিলেন। কংগ্রেস সমাজতন্ত্রীদলের শ্রীযুক্তা অরুণা আসফ আলী সরকারের হস্তে ধরা না দিয়া যতটা সম্ভব অন্তরাল হইতে বিপ্লব পরিচালনা করিতে প্রয়াস পান। তিনি এই সময় বাংলা ও আসাম অঞ্চল পরিভ্রমণ করেন।

আগষ্ট বিপ্লবের পরে : আগষ্ট বিপ্লব আরম্ভ হইবার অব্যবহিত পরে বাংলাদেশে ভীষণ দর্ভিক্ষ হয়। তখনও মহিলাগণ অসহায়া নারী ও শিশুকে রক্ষার জন্য অগ্রসর হইলেন। নারীদের উপর তখন যে নানারূপ অনাচার উৎপীড়ন হইতেছিল, তাহা হইতে আত্মরক্ষার জন্য মহিলা আত্মরক্ষা সমিতি ১৯৪৩ সনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। দর্ভিক্ষপ্রপীড়িত নারীর মুখে অন্নদান এবং দেশে স্থিত বিদেশী সৈন্যদের প্রলোভন হইতে আত্মরক্ষা-এই দুইটি কার্যেই সমিতি বিশেষভাবে আত্মনিয়োগ করে। তখন বাংলার বহু জেলায় ইহার শাখা-সমিতিও প্রতিষ্ঠিত হইয়াছিল। স্বতীয় মহাসমরে উত্তর-পুর্ব এশিয়ায় নেতাজী সুভাষচন্দ্র-পরিচালিত আজাদ হিন্দ ফৌজের অন্তর্গত যে 'বাসীর রাণী' বাহিনী গঠিত হয় তাহাতে প্রবাসিনী বঙ্গমহিলারাও স্থান পাইয়াছিলেন।

সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষে স্বতীয় মহাসমর অন্তে ভারতবাসীদের মধ্যে এরূপ আত্মচেতনা দেখা দিল যে তাহাতে ইংরেজের আর বেশী দিন রাজত্ব করার সম্ভাবনা রহিল না। আজাদ হিন্দ ফৌজের মামলা দেশব্যাপী আলোড়ন উপস্থিত করিল। এই সময় স্ত্রীপুরুষ নিষিদ্ধে যুবক-তরুণী, ছাত্র-ছাত্রী প্রায় সকলেই ইহার মুক্তি কামনা করিয়া হরতাল, শোভাযাত্রা ও সভা-সমিতির অনুষ্ঠান করেন। শ্রীযুক্তা সরোজিনী নাইডু, শ্রীযুক্তা অরুণা আসফ আলী ও অন্যান্য ভারতবিখ্যাত মহিলাগণও এবম্বিধ রাষ্ট্রীয় চেতনার সুযোগে স্বদেশবাসীদের স্বাধীনতা-মন্ত্রে উদ্ভুদ্ধ করিলেন। নব-চেতনার প্রতীক নিখিল-এশিয়া সম্মেলনে সভাপতিত্ব করেন সরোজিনী নাইডু স্বয়ং।

ভারতের স্বাধীনতা-প্রচেষ্টায় নারীও আসিয়া বরাবর পুরুষের পার্শ্ব দাঁড়াইয়াছেন। আজ যে আমরা স্বাধীনতা লাভ করিয়াছি, তাহার মূলেও নারীর দান প্রভূত।

APPENDIX

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I offer my very special thanks to Sree Prankrishna Pal of the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta University, who has so kindly designed the cover illustration and the crest of the college. I thank Sj. Srihari Gangooly who has been helpful in many ways, specially in the general get-up of the volume and the set-up of the pictures. He has also helped in going through the proofs along with Sree Satyakinkar Chatterjee and Sja. Lotika Ghose. The latter who is also Associate Editor of the Volume, has worked tirelessly to get the material ready and see the Volume out of the press. As regards the other articles too help was forthcoming from many other persons and institutions. To them my grateful thanks are offered. Above all, I must record my thanks to the contributors who have spared no trouble in gathering materials of a century's work done by women in various spheres. On behalf of the Bethune College and Collegiate School and its present and past alumni I offer my special thanks to Sree Jogesh Chandra Bagal for tracing the history of the institution with such detail and accuracy.

For helping us with the photographs that we were unable to secure I thank Sree Prahlad Pramanik, Sree Santosh Kumar Chatterjee, Editor of the Municipal Gazette, Sja. Hemlata Mitra, Sree Sukumar Dutta, Sree Prabhat Chandra Ganguly, Sja. Kalyani Sen, Sja. Khemankari Roy, Sja. Bina Das, Sja. Bina Sen, Sja. Sujata Nundy, Sja. Satadal Biswas and Sree Ajendra Krishna Ghose.

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I take this occasion to thank the Bengal Autotype Company, the Bengal Phototype Company and Blockman for enlarging photographs and making blocks for the pictures included in this volume. The unfailing courtesy and accommodation of Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd. who are our printers and who have helped so much in bringing out the Volume in this attractive form deserves special mention.

KALIDAS NAG, *Editor*

When I started plans for the celebration of the Centenary of the Bethune School and College the question of how to raise finances and celebrate the Centenary of the oldest women's institution in modern India which played so great a part in the progress and emancipation of womanhood in a fitting manner was a cause of great anxiety to me. But when I made an appeal to the public and the present and old students the response was beyond all expectation. The students of the college contributed the total amount of the College Union fund amounting to Rs. 1,592/- towards the Celebrations generally. They also contributed the total amount of their Common-room fund amounting to Rs. 1,500/- towards the Exhibition as well as the total amount of two years' Magazine fund amounting to Rs. 1,913/- towards the Centenary Volume. The old students contributed Rs. 400/- from their association and the school contributed Rs. 1,501-15-6 from their Union fund. The ex-students and public were equally responsive and 1,118 persons enlisted themselves as Reception Committee members, the total collection from this source being Rs. 11,180/-. Sale of gate tickets amounted to Rs. 3,913/-, subscriptions amounted to Rs. 4,100-10-0 including the old girls' subscription on the Re-union day and donations amounted to Rs. 1,174/-. Sale proceeds from the contributions of stall-holders amounted to Rs. 1,881-1-6 and sale of souvenirs amounted to Rs. 437/-.

The advertisers of the Centenary Souvenir contributed Rs. 3,074/- and special mention must be made of Mr. Walker and Sree Satyaranjan Sen and others who secured the advertisements and collected the money.

My warmest thanks are offered to one and all whom I have mentioned without whose substantial monetary contribution the Centenary Celebrations could not have been fittingly celebrated.

I now thank with the greatest pleasure all those who helped me by organising and participating in the various functions of the Centenary Celebrations. I am under a deep debt of gratitude to my colleagues of the school and college who worked tirelessly for the success of the Celebrations, the students of both school and college and those ex-students who participated in the different items of the seven-day long programme, the speakers at the symposium and other sessions, those who lent their valuable exhibits and the exhibitors and stall-holders of the exhibition. The distinguished guests who graced the occasion by their presence, the large gathering that assembled each day to take part in the festivities, the girls' band, the fine orchestra which played each day lending harmony to the occasion, Sree Biren Roy of Phillips Roy and Company who was responsible for the beautiful decorative lighting, the women police who maintained order within the compound, and the Press who attended all the sessions and noticed them in their papers.

Lastly, I must offer my heart-felt thanks to the Auditors N. Sarkar and Co. who took such trouble in auditing our accounts, and Dr. Kalidas Nag who has worked so hard for compiling and editing the Centenary Volume.

TATINI DAS,

Principal, Bethune College,

Chairman, Centenary Celebrations Committee

20th December, 1950.

BETHUNE VIDYALAYA

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MRS. MRINALINI EMERSON, M.A.,

Organiser, Symposium

MISS KARUNA KANA GUPTA, M.A.,

Convener, Exhibition Sub-Committee

MISS LOTIKA GHOSE, B.Litt. (Oxon),

dip. ed. (Oxford),

Convener, Volume Sub-Committee

MRS. DIPTI TRIPATHI, M.A.

Convener, Pageant Sub-Committee

MRS. MALATI SEN, M.A.

MISS LABANYALATA SEN, M.A., B.T.

MISS KALYANI SEN, M.A., B.T.

SJ. RAMESH CHANDRA BANDYOPADHYAYA

MRS. RENUKANA MANNA

MR. SANTOSH KR. BANERJEE, M.A.,

Ex-Professor, Bethune College,

Treasurer

MRS. SUPRAVA SEN, M.A., B.T.,

Headmistress,

Bethune School, Secretary

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF BETHUNE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE
CENTENARY VOLUME**

	Rs.	As.	P.
Honorarium to Authors, Collection of Materials, Typing and Paper	745	0	0
Blocks and Photo Enlargements	448	9	0
Honorarium to Artist for Cover Design	50	0	0
Incidental Expenses (Telephone, Postage, Conveyance etc.) ...	50	0	0
Saraswaty Press for Printing, Paper, Binding etc.	4,781	8	0
	<hr style="width: 100%;"/>		
TOTAL	6,075	1	0

Bethune Vidyalaya

Receipts & Payments

RECEIPTS

Rs. As. P.

Rs. As. P.

To COLLECTION:—

(a) College Union Fund	...	1,592	0	0	
(b) College Magazine Fund	...	1,913	0	0	
(c) College Common Room Fund		1,500	0	0	
(d) School Union Fund	...	1,501	15	6	
(e) Old Students' Association's Contribution	... ..	400	0	0	
(f) Advertisement	... ..	3,074	0	0	
(g) Donations	... ..	1,174	0	0	
(h) Sale of Souvenir	...	437	0	0	
(i) Old Students' Re-union	...	280	8	0	
(j) Subscriptions & Others	...	3,820	2	0	15,692 9 6
<hr/>					
„ SALE OF TICKETS	... ..				3,913 8 0
„ COLLECTION FROM RECEPTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS (CARDS)	...				11,180 0 0
„ SALE PROCEEDS OF STALLS	...				187 15 6
(10% of Total Sales by Stall Holders, Rs. 1,881-1-6)					

Carried over ...

30,974 I O

Centenary Celebration.

Account for 1949-50.

PAYMENTS		Rs. As. P.	Rs. As. P.
By DECORATION:—			
(a) Stage & Pandal ...	...	6,320 0 0	
(b) Other Articles ...	...	411 12 0	6,731 12 0
,, SUNDRY EXPENSES:—			
(a) Exhibition ...	...	2,212 12 0	
(b) Show ...	...	600 0 0	
(c) Instrumental Music, Orchestra Party & Amusement ...	...	1,251 12 0	
(d) Miscellaneous Articles ...	...	1,160 6 9	5,224 14 9
,, ELECTRIC CHARGES ...			
			2,460 0 0
,, COOLY & CARTAGE ...			
			34 0 0
,, MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES ...			
			390 5 6
,, REFRESHMENTS:—			
(a) Tree-Plantation Ceremony, Students & Public ...	...	627 10 0	
(b) Opening Ceremony ...	...	182 5 0	
(c) Old Students' Re-union ...	...	515 4 0	
(d) Picnic for College & School Students ...	...	1,000 0 0	
(e) Artists, Menials & Other Staff		765 9 6	3,090 12 6
,, CONVEYANCE ...			
			705 1 0
,, PRINTING & STATIONERY:—			
(a) Blocks ...	...	40 0 0	
(b) Paper ...	...	689 4 0	
(c) Appeal Printing ...	...	225 0 0	
(d) Centenary Celebration Souvenir ...	...	1,242 3 6	
(e) Sundry Printings ...	...	2,753 8 0	
(f) Stationery ...	...	46 7 0	4,996 6 6

Carried over ... 23,633 4 3

Bethune Vidyalaya

Receipts & Payments

RECEIPTS

Rs. As. P.

Brought forward ...

30,974 1 0

Total Rs. ...

30,974 1 0

Centenary Celebration.

Account for 1949-50.

PAYMENTS		Rs.	As.	P.	Rs.	As.	P.
Brought forward	...				23,633	4	3
By POSTAGE & TELEGRAMS	...				363	8	6
.. CENTENARY VOLUME (as paid up to date towards the volume)	...				1,795	0	0
.. CASH & BANK BALANCES:—							
At Bank	4,573	0	9			
In hand	609	3	6	5,182	4	3

Total Rs.	...	30,974	1	0
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We have audited the above Receipts and Payments Account of the BETHUNE VIDYALAYA CENTENARY CELEBRATION for 1949-50, with the books and vouchers submitted to us and found them to be in accordance therewith.

17, Mangoe Lane
Calcutta, the 17th July, 1951.

N. SARKAR & Co.,
Chartered Accountants.

